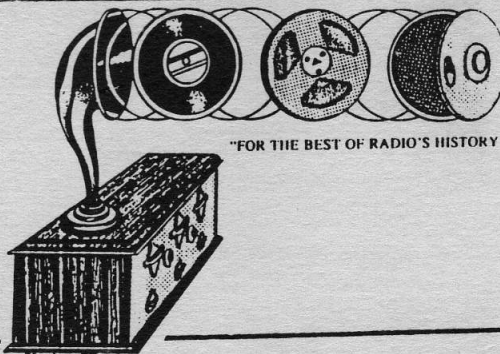


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A JOURNAL OF VINTAGE RADIO

Twenty-five years -- 1972/1997

NARA NEWS[©]

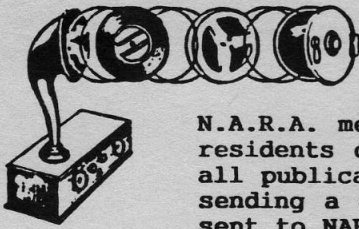
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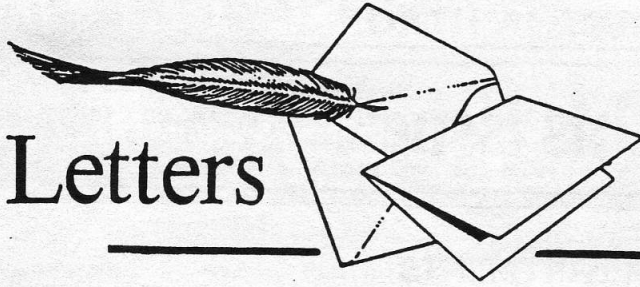
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Letters



from our readers

I'm a great fan of Ozzie Nelson, Harriet Hilliard, David Nelson and Ricky Nelson. Ozzie and I were fellow alumni of Rutgers College. He and his family were beautiful and talented. I liked their music, their TV show and especially their radio show.

David Nelson is the lone survivor of the show-business Nelson family. It would be wonderful if he were part of an OTR convention. It would also be wonderful if he knew how many of their fans would like to hear their radio show and see their TV show again. If I knew how to contact him, I'd explain to him about the demand and whether he could help make their shows available to the public. He may be sitting on a treasure trove. Bringing back the Nelson family would restore our faith in traditional family values and teach a new generation what they have been missing.

Can any of your readers tell me how I can contact David Nelson? I believe he has a TV production company.

Judge Martin Kravarik
Superior Court of New Jersey
P.O. Box 964
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

I have been a member of NARA for almost 2½ years and have been impressed with your organization. The NARA NEWS is an excellent publication and full of interesting articles and information on old time radio, and the cassette library, despite its deficiencies and problems, is a good source of many OTR shows. The only problem with NARA is that it took almost 20 years for me to learn about the organization!

One of the biggest problems with OTR and all the OTR groups that are out there is that many people who are interested in OTR do not know that these groups exist. I guess the point I am trying to make is that if OTR is to expand its membership we will need to try to "advertise" somehow to educate the many people out there who are unaware of groups such as NARA, SPERDVAC, and THE OLD TIME RADIO CLUB.

The OTR SOURCE LIST I received from Jack French is an excellent source of information on OTR. I just wish that I had found it years ago. My sincere thanks to those who put the information together. Information such as this should be required for all OTR enthusiasts.

Grant R. Brees
East Millinocket, Maine

EDITOR'S REPLY: That OTR SOURCE LIST is entirely researched and put together by Jack French. If you don't have a recent copy (the hobby is constantly changing and Jack keeps revising), information on ordering it can be found in the classified ads on page 49.

There is a major error in Roger Smith's article on Fibber McGee and Molly (Spring 1997). I'm positive that Shirley Mitchell played the role of Alice Darling, not Bea Benadaret. I spoke to Shirley Mitchell at the Newark convention in 1995.

David Price
Jackson Heights, New York

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: THE BIG BROADCAST, by Buxton and Owen, agrees with David Price on this issue. I find no other mention of who had this role in any of my other reference books.



THE LIBRARIES Open or Closed - Rent or Buy

by
Don Aston
(NARA's Secretary-Treasurer)

Before I say anything else, let me state emphatically that the CASSETTE LIBRARY will not be permanently closed. The CASSETTE LIBRARY will reopen as soon as possible and it will reopen while we are still reviewing cassettes for quality and usefulness. The CASSETTE LIBRARY should be up and functioning by September, 1997. All members will still be able to RENT cassettes. The option to purchase cassettes will be made available to those members that wish to BUY.

The REEL-TO-REEL LIBRARY is a different matter. It has been closed for two reasons. #1 is the lack of use, and #2 the current librarian doesn't want the responsibility any longer. He also needs the room for something else. The material will still be available to members. How it will be made available has yet to be decided.

NARA has received lots of mail concerning the issue of the libraries. Members are expecting answers to their many questions. Hopefully, this article will answer some. Those of us here at NARA will answer the rest as soon as we can.

There are problems getting the cassette collection transferred from Ohio to California and this is delaying the library's reopening. The time consuming process of reviewing each and every cassette, so necessary, will add to the delay. Members have not been getting decent quality for their rental fees. Members deserve "quality" material from NARA. Right now, we are finding about 2 out of 3 cassettes are not of satisfactory quality and need to be replaced.

NARA could use some help in the Library Project. Many have volunteered their services. The problem is distance from the new library location. We need volunteers that live in the Southern California area or near by. Does this fit you? Let NARA know.

We hope that we have not raised more questions than we have answered. It seems that the more we write about this issue of Libraries, the more we say something that causes problems. We do not want to do that. Please be patient. Programs are not being removed, only bad cassettes. Renting cassettes is not being stopped. We are only adding the option to purchase. When this change is completed, it is expected that the membership will be very pleased with the result.

Membership support is vital. Write or phone with your comments, suggestions, and offers of help. Let NARA hear from you. Meanwhile, while you are waiting for the regular cassette library to reopen, we'd like to remind you that NARA's SCANFAX CASSETTE LIBRARY continues to operate. You will find information on that on page 6.



FROM

FRANK BRESEE

Radio historian Frank Bresee is heard on his "GOLDEN DAYS OF RADIO" broadcast in the United States and Canada over the YESTERDAY USA SATELLITE NETWORK. Frank has a long and distinguished career as a radio performer and producer. He has worked with many greats of fantasy films.

Edgar Bergen passed away on September 30, 1978 in Las Vegas where he was making one of his last professional appearances. I had seen him a week earlier at the Hollywood Brown Derby restaurant when he announced his retirement during a special press conference. Over the years he had appeared on my radio show many times and that last year he and Charlie were featured guests on my CBS-TV "Golden Days of Radio Television Special."

In an interview I did for National Public Radio in 1976, Edgar Bergen told me that he got Charlie during his senior year at Lakeview High School in Chicago. He told me that he would not have graduated without him. In February his history teacher, Miss Angel, told him not to plan on graduating because of his grades. However, in April, during a student recital, Edgar first introduced Charlie to the class, where he took his history teacher and the school principal to task in his comedy routine. Miss Angel asked him to stay after class, and it was then that she told him that the world needed laughter more than a history student, and she said, "If you will try, I'll help you graduate." And that's how he got out of high school.

Although Charlie was acquired in 1922, he always remained twelve years old. Edgar also told me about the time that Charlie was actually kidnapped. "Charlie was kidnapped by a newspaper man in New York. He was taken out of my room at the Waldorf by a man, I think his name was Farrell. It was a stunt, but I wasn't too happy about it because it was bad taste publicity—but they called me at the night club at eleven o'clock and said, 'We hear Charlie has been kidnapped.' I said, 'No, he's in my room.' and they said they wanted me to go home and check it out. Well he was gone, and I ended up having to go to night court at 2 a.m. to get him back.



Frank Bresee, McCarthy, Bergen June 1977

Charlie joined us during the interview and the dialogue went like this:

- FRANK: I see Charlie is here. Can he say something to our audience?
- EDGAR: Well, he belongs to a very strong union, the Lumberman's Union...Charlie, would you say hello?
- CHARLIE: I don't know. What does it pay?
- EDGAR: Never mind.
- CHARLIE: Hello folks—this is Charlie McCarthy, assisted by... what's your name?
- EDGAR: Bergen!
- CHARLIE: Oh yes.
- EDGAR: What would you like to say Charlie about all our years together on radio?
- CHARLIE: Well it's a long story, and a dirty one.
- EDGAR: I know you got in a lot of trouble over the years. Would you change anything?
- CHARLIE: No Bergen. I think I'd get in the same amount of trouble, but I'd start sooner.

Bill Baldwin, longtime announcer for the Bergen/McCarthy show, pointed out that we had lost four other personalities in addition to Edgar—Charlie, Mortimer, Effie, and Ophelia. Baldwin concluded that, "Although we don't have Edgar with us anymore, we are rich in the recordings and films that will continue to be a living tribute to the world's best known ventriloquist."



NARA'S LIBRARY CATALOGS

To obtain catalogs of what is available to members from the various club libraries, please write to the librarians listed below and enclose the price of the catalog.

CASSETTE CATALOG:

PLEASE SEE PAGE 4

REEL-TO-REEL CATALOG:

PLEASE SEE PAGE 4

SCANFAX CASSETTE CATALOG:

A list of the various program series that are available in our new SCANFAX cassette library is available for \$1.00 and a self addressed stamped envelope. You can then request program titles for those series that are of interest to you. Send your requests to Don Aston, P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531.

PRINTED MATERIALS CATALOG:

The printed materials library currently has three catalogs: the book catalog (407 books), the script catalog (228 scripts), and the catalog of logs (29 logs). To receive all three of these, please send ten 32 cent stamps to Bob Sabon, 308 West Oraibi Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027.



ROGER
HILL

NARA's
25th
ANNIVERSARY

THE OLD CURMUDGEON

Editor Jim Snyder asked me to relate some of the background regarding the beginnings of North American Radio Archives. I hesitated to do so since this has been done several times before in the pages of NARA NEWS. But not knowing if current membership includes those who have received these earlier issues, I suppose it is appropriate, on the occasion of NARA's 25th "Birthday", to say a few more words about our start. Certainly, I never expected all the things to happen that did happen and back in 1972 it just seemed the thing to do....to start a 'club' for people who liked old time radio as much as some of us did.

My wife of that time was very supportive and also enjoyed some of the old radio shows I'd begun to acquire. She was an independent sort and allowed me the freedom to pursue what I enjoyed just as she also pursued her own career and interests. So I owe much to her for allowing me to devote time and money to getting NARA established. Thank you Jessica Ordon, wherever you are!

In 1967 I was a student at San Francisco State University and trying desperately after many many years of ups and downs to obtain a bachelor's degree in Biology with intention to go into high school teaching. I also pursued a minor field of study in Radio-Television-Film after taking a summer course in TV Studio Production taught by a Mr. Quinn Millar. It was so different an approach than studying Biology and I got "turned on" to this exciting area of study. While taking some other classes in the Broadcasting Department, I had such professors as a Mr. Galbraith (who was once an announcer for the Jack Webb comedy show) and a Mr. Paul Smith (who worked as audio engineer for the networks). Paul introduced us to radio history by playing some excerpts of shows and odd things (all the wheezes he edited

out from a recording session at Bing Crosby's home when Bing had a bad cold). A few of us asked Paul how we could hear more of these old shows and he let us have access to a few things then put us in touch with a couple of collectors and someone named Dave Golden of Radio Yesteryear.

My classmate and good friend, John Robbins and I, dived headfirst into purchasing what we could afford (not much back then) and writing to the few names we had to find out about trading radio shows.

The following 4 years passed as we each completed our college work, found employment, continued collecting OTR and learning which reels of tape were best and which side had the oxide. (cassettes were of very poor quality at that time) My first Masters Degree ended up being in the field of Broadcasting although I was teaching Biology in the San Francisco high schools.

Then Dr. George Steiner, a professor at SFSU, offered me a chance to teach his course on radio history. This gave me a chance to develop a wealth of materials and to begin using in a productive way many of the radio show materials I'd acquired. There were many friends made as a result of radio collecting and trading. Dennis Rongitsch, Michael and Sandra McAviney, Tom Price, Al Vesik, Wynn Hoskins, and Dave Breninger just to mention a few in the S.F. Bay Area.

After one semester of teaching at SFSU, I found it possible to offer similar classes at the College of San Mateo and at University of California in Berkeley. All of this is sort of background to the establishment of NARA. During these years of 1967 to 1972, Jessica and I had also gotten to know and become friends with Carlton E. Morse and spent a number of hours on different occasions visiting with Mr. & Mrs. Morse at their home in Woodside, some 35 miles

south of San Francisco. My introduction to Carlton was due to research for my Master's thesis while at SFSU.

Somehow along the way I'd gotten to know Matthew Krim (I hope you readers realize I'm checking back into previous issues of NARA NEWS to "remember" these names) whose wife (at that time) was an attorney for AT&T. Matt and I had talked about the need for some sort of national organization to keep old radio 'alive'. It was really his pushing to get something going and through his wife's willingness to help with the legal forms and applications for non-profit status that anything did happen.

I remember the first filing in October, 1972 of applications and those wordy legal papers with the "Articles of Incorporation" and all that paperwork which I hate to be bogged down with. We'd send the stuff in to California's Secretary of State then weeks later get it back for revision and rewriting. Another submission and another return. The same was true for our filing with IRS for exemption. It was finally in January of 1973 that we received our approved status from California and April of 1973 when the IRS gave their approval. It seems we were the first organization of its kind with tax-deductible status as a non-profit group.

Financial donations were needed to get NARA off the ground so several of us put in \$100 each and there were a couple of collectors not in the immediate area who also added to the pot. Fred Dickey (now in Sequim, Washington) was one such supporter and John Olsen in Oregon was another.

The first business meeting was held in December of 1972 to discuss newsletter, goals, projects, logos, labels, address for mailings, and what to eat at future meetings! Any of you who have been involved with the "birth" for an organization know the pains involved in producing such a "baby". We decided to host a tribute dinner and chose Carlton E. Morse and June as the month (his birthday was in that month). Subsequent meetings were held in one another's home. This

meant quite a bit of traveling as Al Vesik lived in Stockton, the McAvineys in San Jose, Wynn Hoskins in Oakland, and yours truly was in San Francisco.

Luckily, I hadn't had a chance to do too much damage to the camaraderie at that point so everyone pitched in and made the dinner for Carlton a success. JoAnne Verigin in Sacramento was instrumental in contacting people and putting together a memory book for Carlton. This album contained telegrams and letters from many people who knew, loved, and worked with Carlton as well as a few notables such as then-Governor Ronald Reagan. Rowell Gorman, another collector and artist, provided a beautiful color tribute for Carlton (Rowell is the one who designed our first logo rendition of horn speaker spinning out an electrical transcription becoming a reel of tape and ending up in a vault).

For those curious as to where the dinner was and what we had, it was at the Cathay House in Chinatown and we had Melon Crab Meat Birds Nest Soup, Fried Whole Chicken with Oyster Sauces, Peking Duck with Buns, Black and Straw Mushroom Abalone, Mixed Vegetable Boneless Chicken, Cashew Nut Cooked Shrimp, Chinese Green Beef Cubes, and Sweet and Sour Pork. (See what you missed!) Our hostess was Takyng Wong.

A beautiful 28 page booklet was put together with the help of Wynn Hoskins and everyone attending received one of these full-sized mementos. Inside you could read about Carl E. Morse's "Sidewalks of San Francisco" column and some of his very early radio work pre-dating One Man's Family. These included "Roads to Hollywood", "Split Second Tales", and "Captain Post: Crime Specialist" among some 18 titles. Photos and text

honored the establishment of OMF on Friday, April 29th in 1932. After 3,256 episodes, OMF ended on Friday, May 8th of 1959. And Carlton said he thought back in 1932 he only had enough in him for 4 or 5 scripts! The booklet reveals also that the Penn Tobacco Company, makers of Kentucky Club cigarettes, stopped sponsorship of OMF in 1935.

Not to neglect I LOVE A MYSTERY, several pages of the booklet also contains text and photos relating to this series. I liked the 12/9/39 news item which related that Harry Leopold felt lucky to be able to hear the final episode in one of the ILAM stories before going to the gas chamber in Colorado to pay for his own crime.

The 24th page of this booklet reproduces one of Carlton's "Random Reflections" columns in which he paid tribute to Paul Carson, organist for OMF and ILAM. Two pages are used to list the awards given to Carlton from 1934 through 1973. I'm sorry we don't have any extra copies of this to send to NARA members today. If anyone wishes to order photocopies, contact me and I'll use mine to make your copies (\$5).

Numerous photos were taken at the Tribute Dinner and some of these are in an album which is kept in the library of our business, Nothing's New, in San Bruno. Customers and members are welcome to browse and read and enjoy these things here but although I did loan it once to SPERDVAC, I don't think I lend it out on a regular basis. We once had sets of photos members could purchase of that 1973 event but I've no idea where any negatives might be now. In the album are photos of Wynn, the McAvineys, Dave, Al, and preparations at the Cathay House. There are also some interesting shots of a younger Frank Breese and his 'partially clad' blonde friend who received her share of admiring glances, a picture of Les Tremayne being given a carnation to wear by JoAnne, and many photos of Carlton, Bernice Berwin, Michael Raffetto, Bill Andrews, Bill Baldwin, Alice Backes, Jeanne Bates, Patricia Morse and so many others chitting and chatting together. In one photo I can even make out Dudley Sherril, a friend and collector I've been in close contact with ever since 1973. He still works for the S.F. Park and Recreation Department and has visited the store we have a couple of times. One danger of dinners such as we hosted are the sneaky effects of those delicious cocktails.

Well, our annual tribute dinner plans came to a halt after that first one. I blame

myself for being very insensitive to the needs of the other officers and for not sharing with them some of the spotlight. I made many serious and not-so-serious mistakes as the founder and first president of NARA. I wish I could go back and undo them....NARA might have had an even stronger and better role to play in radio history and preservation. But the best I can do from this point in time is to acknowledge the mistakes and to apologize to any of those who might read or hear of this particular NARA NEWS issue. I do hope by placing their name in print and remembering them these 25 years later, it lets them know that they were the important forces behind NARA and not myself.

I don't want to forget that the initial printing and design for NARA's membership cards and mailing labels then were handled by Heritage Press in S.F. They also reproduced the B&W 1950 CBS poster which portrays in caricature the many stars and shows that network had then after Jack Benny left NBC for CBS. Members of NARA at that time received these posters for a nominal fee. We have none left to send at this time.

Looking through the past 25 years worth of our publications, I'm really quite amazed at the amount of work and research and creative writing by those who worked for NARA's betterment and who contributed to the journal. We were 'Tipping the Atwater Dial' to James Cotta, James Yeary, James Allon, Robert Reynolds, Jack Williams, Roger Jany, Ralph Eck, Desmond Barker Jr., Herbert Ramsey, and Mel Shlank for monetary contributions. And to Mrs. Ted Lewis for donations of memorabilia on her husband's career. Also to F.A. Gentile for giving electrical transcriptions (which we taped for the lending library). Bill Snook donated 48 hours of uncirculated radio shows, Ransom Sherman gave a 1929 newspaper honoring radio, Crowell Beech of Postal Instant Press in S.F. helped us in printing the Newsletter at cost. Ralph Miller assisted NARA in acquiring 40 old radio magazines and Bob Lozier donated 3 books. As I'm looking at the v.2:#2 issue

of NARA NEWS (1974) I notice that we had 5,000 brochures printed up two years earlier to promote the organization and they were all gone by this time. Where in heck could they have all gone?

When the initial group of officers quit NARA (for reasons I alluded to earlier), I had no choice but to struggle along for awhile doing everything while searching for help...and vowing not to be so neglectful of friends and colleagues in the future.

By 1975, we were hearing from others about groups such as Radio Historical Society of America in Cloquet, Minnesota and their publication Radio Dial and from Joe Crawford about bad experiences with Radio Nostalgia by Virgil James in New Jersey. Cortland Parent Jr. was seeking Fred Allen and Baby Snooks material. A high school teacher named Linda Sass in Genoa, Nebraska was seeking materials to help her teach about radio and television. Daniel Daggett sought Lone Ranger information. Pat McCoy declined to write an article for us about selling radio shows (there was quite a controversy there for awhile over selling shows). Margaret Young wanted information on NARA for a 4th edition of the Directory of Special Library reference book. Allen Rockford was hosting a show on WCNY in Syracuse and publishing The Sounds of Yesterday. Stations such as WOAK-FM, KOPN, and WIUP-FM were writing to NARA to ask for help in putting together old radio show selections for broadcasting.

By 1976, Tom Price (Salinas, California) was treasurer, Sherill and Gayle Bland (Reno, Nevada) were membership and tape librarians, Al Inkster (Tucson, Arizona) was editor. NARA was still stuck with me as president. Tom, The Blands, and Al all did a superb job running things right and taking care of member's needs, complaints, donations, and comments. We thanked Carl Barnum, Al Rodosevich, Jack French, George Oliver, Frank Bresee (again), Jerry Chapman, and Rick Tobin for their help and support through articles, donations, and other assistance.

Arthur Delaney's article on investigating old radio as instruction medium continued to set the tone of academic worth for NARA NEWS. The size had grown to a respectable 36 pages and it was looking quite professional.

Others who wrote offering help, money, articles and comments included Ron Kula, Jimmy Thornton, John Olsen, Stuart Jay Weiss, Jack Sanders, George Oliver, Dennis Rongitsch, Ron Miyashiro, Richard Koczmarek, Frank Dacey, Don Sherwood, Sol Feldman, Dave Amaral, Ron Hare, Richard Brockelman, Larry Rybicki, Vincent Tyndall, and John Pellatt.

Members were actively borrowing tapes and commenting about them. We heard from Bill Kapp and Gilbert Wayne Jacobs among others.

I've mentioned these many names from the early days because it's easy to forget how much an organization has been helped to succeed and grow by each one of its members. It's too easy to lose sight of that fact. Some of these names I knew personally as good friends, some have passed on and are mourned and missed, others have become more involved with NARA (notice our Canadian correspondent John Pellatt has been with NARA for nearly 25 years!). You may know some of these people and if you are in touch at all, perhaps it would please them to know they are remembered and thanked once more these many years later for their support and their contributions so that NARA could now enjoy a 25th birthday.

Looking back through these earlier issues I can remember (sometimes with a chuckle and a smile, sometimes with sadness) the moments of anger, of argument, of misunderstanding, of excitement, and of pleasure which are probably the part-and-parcel of any organizations history.

In 1977 we were offering 8 different membership categories ranging from under 18 (Junior) for \$5 to Patron for \$1,000 (which included life membership). We had no takes for the Patron category. Judith

Helton had been taking care of membership dues until her illness. The format under editor Inkster became more established as to what we have today. A nice table of contents, 60 pages, and a variety of articles. I was pleased to see our treasurer's report that we'd received \$2,762.84 and had paid out \$2,486.00 which left us with a balance in the black.

NARA donated 50 cassette tapes of radio shows to leprosy patients at Kalaupapa on Molokai, Hawaii (it is a very isolated community!) and this generated letters from Steven Hiss and Lora Palmer, who donated an additional 12 hours to Kalaupapa residents. I met Lora at the Newark OTR 20th anniversary convention and mistook her for Jack Palmer's wife. I still turn red when I think of these faux pas. (Am I forgiven yet?).

NARA was getting letters from Alaska and London, England as well as from all around the U.S. In today's ethernet age, world wide communication is nothing to be excited about but in 1977, it was thrilling for NARA. Many names from these earlier publications I still see active in vintage radio...such as Ed Carr of Pennsylvania and Mickey Smith of the Univ. of Miss. School of Pharmacy who wrote an article for NARA NEWS on druggis Peavey on the Gildersleeve program. You may be aware that Mickey Smith has book out by Scarecrow Press, "Pharmacy and Medicine On the Air" (1989). So I feel honored that NARA featured this author way back when.

In the vol. 5:3 issue of Autumn 1977 is also an interesting article by Sheldon Gloger who put together a book on S.F. area radio stations as a reflection of his love for radio. I got to meet him and he was very interesting. No idea where he is now or what has become of the book. Our own lending library may have a copy.

By 1978, although the staffing was pretty much the same, I'd moved to Hawaii after a divorce (can't run away from yourself I found) and NARA had tried a variety of advertising to promote the organization. This ranged from Apartment Life and

Saturday Review to Media and Methods and Hello Again. Results were mixed and somewhat disappointing although Jack Hickerson's publication gave the best mail responses of all. We didn't try such diverse advertising again.

Letters received ranged from Sarah Carlson of NPR in Washington, D.C. to Gerry Liever-Mackay of SPERDVAC's cassette library. The Blands furnished information on Corry High School's OTR club (in Reno), faculty adviser James Greenwood reaffirmed Jack French's article on "Copyright Confusion", and Jerry Perchesky wrote about the Pacific Pioneer Broadcaster luncheons and meeting Bing Crosby and access to many ETs. I heard from and later met InaJane Nicklas who was associated with KVHS-FM in Concord, Calif. Rosemary Green contacted the Blands about using "Let's Pretend" shows in her work with delinquents in the area of Oakland, California. Charles Ordowski asked me in his letter, "how does one go about collecting 9,600 programs and do you listen to any or all of them?". That was a great question then and I think the only answers could be: 1) very much like Topsy, it just grew; 2) yes to some, no to all.

A Pastor Garth Barber of Wichita, KS wrote that he'd like to be more involved but he just had too much else to do. (Sound familiar?) Dentist Dr. John Sheridan in Shreveport, LA wrote an article about using OTR as diversion while working on teeth. A nice item on Ted Lewis appeared in v. 6:1 of the Spring '78 issue. Jack French did a fine article on "Radio Traitors of W.W. II". And I tried to write about radio and the comics but ended up with numerous errors as pointed out by Bill Thailing of Cleveland.

Other 1978 NARA NEWS issues featured tips on using OTR for teaching; compliments from Don Pellow, publisher of "Echoes of the Past"; letters from Hal Peary; articles on Tony Hancock and in the Autumn issue, a review of how NARA got started. This was a revision of an article first in v. 2:1. A sampling of what

appeared in the first 5 years of the NEWS was presented along with a multitude of illustrations, photos, and such to fill an 80 page journal. I think it was in 1977 that Gene Larson's artwork began appearing regularly.

By 1979, NARA gained an assistant editor, John Wesche in Syracuse. John Pellatt provided insight to Bob & Ray; Charles Stumpf wrote of Irene Wicker, Verna Felton and Minerva Pious; and George Steiner of SFSU told of the mythology in THE LONE RANGER series, while Rex Miller explained Bud Collyer and Superman. Gene Larson became listed as a NARA officer; Jack French told about Tom Mix; members could read about Dounia Rathbone, Basil Rathbone's granddaughter, starting a catering firm in Brooklyn and calling it "Remember Basil, Ltd."

Hal Layer of SFSU sought Paul Gibson information but was unable to find any audio recordings. Seth Parker got a going over by C. Stumpf and Mike Gerrard in England explained differences between American and British radio. Brenda Bland did a very fine article on Lum and Abner which resulted in a complimentary letter from Chester Lauck to the parents of Brenda (who just happened to be NARA's lending library custodians).

Prolific writer Jack French wrote about Sherlock Holmes. Another big 80 page NARA NEWS came out with v. 8:2 in Summer of 1980 with an article on LUX RADIO THEATER by a writer named James Snyder. That name should sound familiar for it is (as Bill Stern might have said), "the very same James Snyder who years later would grab the helm of editorship for NARA and sail that organization's ship to calmer and bluer waters". Charlie Stumpf was back with an item on Bea Benaderet while Arthur Retzlaff asked "Why Listen to OTR?" and provided some very good reasons for doing so. Mr. French told all one needed to know about Charlie Chan; J. Pellatt reported on radio in Canada; Fred King asked if "Tapes are Better than Being There?" and Don Koehnemann told us about Clara, Lu 'N' Em, a little known serial with very few surviving recordings. Even the ones I had are now "who-knows-where?".

You've heard the phrase from Tale of Two Cities? "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". Well, parts of 1978 through 1981 were the worst of times for this writer and some of my efforts for NARA were not what they should have been. Thankfully, this organization is more than just one person and can survive in spite of failures of any one officer. In 1980 I briefly moved back to California. Ron Kula had signed on as cassette librarian, Fred McLaren was a contributing artist and John Pellatt was our Canadian editor.

Jack Shugg wrote about trying to help out Raymond Edward Johnson (host for INNER SANCTUM), I wrote of visiting John P., Ron K., the Blands, Al I. and others during my trip to see my parents and then back to California. Among other items was one about the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus, Ohio and many thousands of ETs they hold.

In 1980, Steve Ham of Fremont took over as publisher since a certain R. Hill dropped out of site for awhile (adolescence can be such a trying time!). Don Aston picked up the ball as treasurer while Tom Price took a well-deserve rest from all he'd done for NARA over the previous years. Henriette Klawans submitted an article on VIC AND SADE; Mr. J. French did one on "Radio Libraries in Washington"; and Don Koehnemann submitted an article on a radio program that wasn't... "Three Sheets to the Wind".

As 1981 got under way, Jack French took over as editor and Al Inkster was able to "retire" (No, NARA has no pension fund...no gold watches...just a "hearty handclasp" as W.C. Field received). The content of the NEWS seemed to broaden with articles on baseball, singing cowboys, Chickenman, script guides, and information about Raymond Graham Swing.

By the end of 1981, Al Inkster was vice-president and printed materials librarian, Hal Widdison of Flagstaff was librarian for the reel library and the treasurer's report showed a balance in the black of \$251.04. Ominously, the NEWS was now at 30 pages.

Also starting in 1980 was a sister publication called "Through the Horn". This was meant to be a newsletter-type to fill the void between when the NARA NEWS came out (which was sometimes too few and far between issues).

By 1982, the Blands decided enough was enough and retirement looked good to them too. The NEWS now featured more obituary reprints as so many of our favorite personalities were leaving us. Gene Larson not only furnished illustrations but also did some writing about his recollections. Steve Ham was now serving as president, membership chairman, and publisher. The issues were holding at 30 pages but Ron Kula dropped out of sight and the cassette lending library ground to a halt. In fact, it disappeared. Apparently in North Dakota, many things disappear. Al Inkster continued providing book reviews and the Winter 1982-1983 v.10:4 issue had a new look.

By Spring 1983, the publication looked better than it had in a long while. Celebrating the 10th anniversary of NARA, the cover reflected celebration and it once again was a respectable 58 pages. The first 10 years were summarized; many obituaries appeared; Gene Larson did a centerfold which showed us all doing whatever we did; and Steve Ham announced plans for a West Coast convention. By the end of 1983, Jackie Thompson joined the staff as membership chairman (in Cincinnati, Ohio).

If it seems desirable, I'll continue this in the next NARA NEWS. I enjoy looking back over the trials and tribulations of how NARA has grown and to be reminded how much everyone has contributed to making NARA what is now is. I continue to be amazed that the organization has survived, grown, continued to provide at least a semi-academic publication at times. The writers who research and provide articles to NARA NEWS do more good with their efforts than they may realize.

FRED ALLEN/JACK BENNY

At a Friars' dinner honoring Jack Benny, Fred Allen made a comment about Jack's talent with the violin: "Jack is the only fiddler who makes you feel the strings would sound better back in the cat."

Chris Lembesis (co-author of *Suspense*, *Quiet Please*, and *Dragnet* logs and books) has commented to me how angry and frustrated he is that so few new people are coming into the hobby and so much more radio material is potentially lost forever. I can understand his concern, especially with the pressures of today and the technology consuming our interests and time. But the optimistic view sees also the revitalization of interest in radio drama, in radio's unique "theater of the mind" capability. I think each of us who love radio as it was can do our part simply by sharing what we have and know with others. In a small way, I hope the radio lending library at Nothing's New can do its part in this fashion. We have mostly older people borrowing the cassette tapes but occasionally younger individuals such as a John Horton who must be a Junior High student I think, comes with his dad from San Jose to rent our tapes. And he's the one who loves vintage radio...though his father does also listen to the shows.

I know it isn't possible for NARA members to descend on our little business to use the libraries here but any of you who do come by are more than welcome to browse through the back issues of NARA NEWS (and any of the other radio hobby organization publications we have) and borrow them briefly to make photocopies nearby. I can make photocopies of specific items for any of you (20¢ per page) but without an index of all back issues and their contents it's hard to know what to ask for and where it might be. I think the NARA lending library of printed materials has back issues too.

Remember, the staff of NARA are NOT PAID! They are all volunteers. Often, they use their own money to get the job done. Contribute your time and/or money if you can. Until next issue, 'bye for now.

It's not always a bed of roses in OTR's cyber world

by Bob Burnham

It seems like I'm always on the verge of doing something important in my life, and in the middle of it all, the latest issue of NARA News arrives and makes me stop and think. It makes me realize that (despite what I may have thought the day before) the world of old-time radio collecting still consists of some genuinely fine people and how important OTR is to my life. It's amazing too, what an unique aggregation of them exist between the covers of every issue!

I've said it many times, but it bears repeating: **NARA News remains consistently among the finest and most interesting of the OTR publications** (and they don't pay me to write this stuff either!). Somehow, after reading what everyone has said (and I do read it cover to cover), I am reassured that **"all's right in the OTR world."** It's inspiring to read about some of the positive things other collectors are doing, or thinking. Of course, my columns (if not about nuts and bolts topics) are notorious for taking some of the warm fuzzies off the edge. Perhaps my function is to add a touch of realism to the journal from the uglier side of old-time radio collecting.

I'm one of those guys who's been down in the deepest, darkest trenches of OTR — I've seen both the sour side of OTR from all possible angles as well as its brightest moments. I **know** there are others involved in NARA who have been down in the **OTR Cellar of Doom**, too. Almost everyone who has been a collector and/or OTR dealer for 20+ years (as it seems most of us who write have been) has been there or knows the intimate details of what it's like down there.

Perhaps the most difficult thing about staying in the hobby for so long, is staying positive, remaining active and maintaining the interest. Publications such as NARA News and organizations like NARA, and annual conventions such as the annual Friends of Old time Radio and Cincinnati conventions are part of the support team (if you will) and for me, inspiration that keeps ME interested.

Henry Hinkel's **Thoughts of a Collector** column in the Winter 1997 issue covered OTR on the internet — a topic I've covered myself — but he covered it in an especially enjoyable fashion. I loved his use of word "RUN" in reference to his wife and son who are the family members who use their home computer. The use of the word "RUN" reminded me of the large mechanical adding machines banks had prior to the invention of the calculator. Some still keep them around as collector's items. A bank employee would "RUN" some figures through the adding machine which would noisily grind out a paper tape of the mechanically assembled figures. That of course, is from the era when radios had nice warm fuzzy tubes...OK, so they weren't fuzzy, but they did glow.

In reality, the word "RUN" **IS** an **appropriate** — though nostalgic — use of the word in reference to computers. For example, "RUN" is a command still used in IBM Windows software which can among other things, begin the process of installing software on the computer. I have always used Mac computers. "INSTALL" is used if that's what you really want to do with software on a Mac. In the IBM world, to leave a program, the word "EXIT" is used. In Mac, the word is "QUIT."

The word "RUN" is also a word that I sometimes feel like in regards to getting away from certain people in OTR who are **NOT** positive. It makes one suspect they may have other underlying (read ominous) motives in mind. I won't make any further comment here because they'll probably write more nasty, slanderous things about me in the online internet publication.

I was delighted to see Mr. Hinkel's column was positive in regard to commendable work of Lou Genco and Bill Pfeiffer who have promoted the hobby extensively through administering their e-mailed OTR publications

and outstanding web sites.

I would also like to point out, however, that the caliber of people and what is said in the internet publications is not as easy to control as it is in a printed publication. In the internet world, any comments one makes about certain shows or issues appear publicly instantaneously. Usually within 24 hours of when they are written, they are being read by literally thousands (potentially millions) of people worldwide. When controversial issues arise (as there are some in OTR), sometimes people respond emotionally without thinking. This can result in a snowball effect of others joining in the discussion. Sometimes this is good. Issues that might take a year to be presented such as in publications such as Bob Burchett's legendary Old Time Radio Digest — can be presented, ironed out and resolved in a week or a days time.

Other issues in our hobby, however, can never be resolved. This results in what is called "flame wars" which when written at the heat of someone's emotional response (and submitted seconds later) causes hatred and creates enemies of collectors who were at one time friends. This "snowball effect" can turn the friendly world of OTR into one of hatred and name-calling if the administrators or moderators don't step in and call a halt to the war.

My advice to anyone who ventures into the world of OTR on the internet is to proceed slowly and don't always expect it to be anything like the positive upbeat columns in NARA News. It's not always a bed of roses in OTR's cyber world.

Sure, as Mr. Hinkel points out, you WILL find many familiar names contributing to the online Digest, and there's oceans of valuable information and interesting topics related to old-time radio. You will, however, also find an equal number of people who have vastly different ideas of what's right and what's wrong compared to what you'll find in the friendlier OTR hobbyist print media.

Unfortunately, in the internet arena, some of us who have been crusaders and promoters of OTR for 20+ years are not given the same level of respect and recognition that we're accustomed to. As an example, note that several of the people writing for NARA News are recipients of the Allen Rockford Award. That means somewhere along the line, such individuals did something that went far and above and beyond the normal call of duty as far as promoting/preserving OTR. This means virtually nothing to those on the "other side of the fence." As a sidebar note, it is curious to me that some of the people that have made the most money from OTR have not been not recipients of this award. Take that for what it's worth and chew on it awhile.

In the IBM-based computer world, you "EXIT" to leave a program you're through with. As I said, I use Mac and "QUIT" is the appropriate command I'm familiar with.

The only reason I haven't "QUIT" the **OTR Program** yet is because I believe there are enough collectors still around like me who DON'T live each day finding reasons to publicly condemn what their fellow OTR collectors are doing to promote the hobby.

I know this to be true, because as I've already pointed out, there's a collection of us who contribute columns for each issue of NARA News. Sure, a few of us hobbyists have had our differences among us, but we all have common areas of agreement...ALL of us — every one of us.

Jack French made some excellent points about our Editor's skill in assembling this crew of writers. I echo Jack's closing words: *"I [also] look forward to future service, camaraderie and informative data from this organization."*

The beauty of the printed page (versus what may scroll across your computer screen daily) is the very nature of the physical act of composing columns like this one. Some of the comments written online are spur-of-the-moment segments of thoughts — perhaps incomplete, perhaps tinged with the wrong kind of emotion. My columns here are generally more in depth or theme-oriented explorations into whatever topic I'm writing about. They sometimes sit on the computer for a few days and I'll go back in and change some things around when I discover I didn't write exactly what I meant or was too vague, or maybe decide the wrong use of certain words will make some readers respond in a manner I didn't intend (sometimes there will be an unexpected reaction even when

I write EXACTLY what I think, but that's the nature of what I write about). The point is, there is an opportunity to more carefully construct and shape thoughts — and while it could be considered a disadvantage not to get feedback to your writing within 24 hours, it is also an advantage. Those who really feel compelled to respond to something in a letter to the editor (or me) will take an equal amount of time to respond if they're going to that amount of trouble. What does all this have to do with old-time radio? We are in the information age and OTR has strong representation in the electronic world. Yet, we must not get so caught up in it that we forget what our home bases for information are and have been for many years.

It is too easy to say: I get the OTR internet digest everyday. Why do I need.... a subscription to Bob Burchett's Old Time Radio Digest, Jay's Hello Again, a membership in NARA, SPERDVAC, etc. etc.

It's because publications like these (and others) are the lifeblood of the OTR hobby. It's very simple. The people who are really serious and at the core of OTR use the **printed** publications to provide the depth of information on an on-going basis that is not as common in the electronic journals. It is true a lot of us jump in to the electronic world from time to time, and may contribute longer articles, logs and such to web sites. But as far as I'm concerned, **the printed word in the OTR hobby is still where it's at.**

When I started writing this column this evening, I was in a cynical, snarling mood, but that has changed just in the short duration of time it took assemble these words. After all, how can you stay in a bad mood on the occasion of NARA's 25th Birthday?

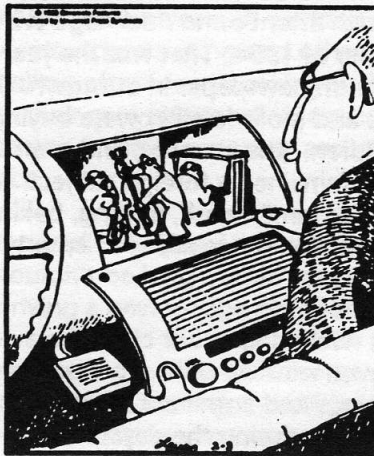
(By the way, belated congratulations NARA on 25 years of service. I suggest we have the party at Jim Synder's place, and he can cut the cake. Don Aston can scoop the ice cream, and Ron our illustrious President can blow out the candles...he always was a lot of hot.....)

< OOPS.. The computer crashed, I lost the rest of that paragraph! >

Meantime, don't send me any hate e-mail or I'll send a coded message back that will cause your entire OTR collection to self-erase, after which it will cause your computer and modem to explode... **(I'm kidding!)**
See ya next time.

Bob Burnham / BRC Productions / Platecap@aol.com / FAX (313) 277-3095

THE FAR SIDE



Jim Cox

DAYTIME DIARY

The Perfectly Named Serial Heroine



Any program that could command a loyal following for almost 24 years must have done something right. Any program that had a lock on the same time period on the same network for five days a week across 19 consecutive years must have done just about everything right.

Such was the acclaim for *Backstage Wife* aired at 4 p.m. Eastern Time daily from 1938-55 on NBC. Originally presented on the Mutual Broadcasting System starting August 5, 1935, *Wife* offered so much promise that in only a few months (on March 30, 1936) it had gained a quarter-hour on the more prestigious NBC Blue (later ABC) network. Canceled after just three months there, it returned to the air a few weeks later, September 16, 1936, on NBC Red. Nearly two decades later, as that web acceded to the cries of its affiliates to reduce its programming so the stations could air more profitable locally-produced features, NBC finally swept *Wife* aside on June 1, 1955. But rival network CBS reshuffled its daytime programming at that juncture. Because of *Wife's* enormously large and loyal following, CBS acquired it, programming it at 12:15 p.m. It became the fourth network to air the washboard weeper. CBS was able to squeeze out another three-and-a-half years of absorbing melodrama involving the Nobles before pulling the plug on the series January 2, 1959. That day, responding to pleas from *its* affiliates for more local time, the network wiped out all but a half-dozen of its long-running serials, the backbone of its entire daytime schedule.

While I had never paid much attention to *Backstage Wife* during the 40s, my familiarity with the show began in the summer of 1954. That was the year of my first paying job -- as a delivery carrier for the daily afternoon newspaper in our town. Television was in its infancy. It was still a novelty, although more and more families were buying TV sets. Most households still included two parents and children. The concept, and even the necessity, for middle class women to work outside the home remained a foreign subject. While a woman's place was in the home, her busy day included the family wash, ironing, baking, cleaning, making beds, raising children and buying groceries for the family. For entertainment, she turned to her radio as a daytime diversion.

The summer of 1954 was sweltering in our city. The average home of that era did not have central air conditioning or even window units. Instead, we relied on screened-in porches, open windows under canvas awnings and entrances fronted by screen doors to expel some of the heat that built up inside the house during the day.

It was in this neighborhood environment that I made my late afternoon rounds through suburbia delivering newspapers six afternoons a week. As I biked from house to house pitching rolled papers onto sidewalks and porches, my ears picked up strains of *The Rose of Tralee* played on a studio organ, the theme song that ushered in episodes of *Backstage Wife* Monday-through-Friday.

By 4 o'clock there was a lull in the daytime network programming. CBS had expended three hours of daily washboard weepers and Art Linkletter had said "goodby" to the last child he would interview on *House Party* for the day. ABC and MBS had pared their daytime programming to a few yet-to-be-heard juvenile adventure series. By then, NBC carried on with three full hours of its own serials -- and little competition for a homemaker's attention.

As *Wife's* theme began to fade, Ford Bond -- once voted by listeners as the eighth "best announcer on radio" -- introduced the durable series with this epigraph: "Now we present once again *Backstage Wife*, the story of Mary Noble, a little Iowa girl who married one of America's most handsome actors, Larry Noble, matinee idol of a million other women -- the story of what it means to be the wife of a famous star."

As this was the program of choice by my newspaper readers at that hour, I continued from house to house hardly missing a word of the dialogue.

Sandwiched between *The Right to Happiness* and *Stella Dallas*, to its final broadcast *Wife* depended upon a recurring theme that was present from its start. Handsome Broadway actor Larry Noble was attractive to women -- almost *all* women -- and did not have the fortitude to spurn their advances. The men on this program were constant reminders that the other gender was the superior one. If the males weren't unbalanced, they were certainly weak.

Simultaneously, Larry's kindhearted homemaker spouse, Mary Noble, called by soap opera historiographer Raymond William Stedman "the most perfectly named serial heroine," was attractive to men. Across two dozen years of wedded "bliss" the couple remained on the fringes of suspicion, jealousy, misunderstanding and others' deceit. How could they not with so many glamorous women falling after Larry, working such references as "Larry, darling," "my love" and "Larry dearest" into their conversations? Mary had her suitors, too, but they were kept at bay. Her firm, unwavering sense of propriety and commitment to Larry constantly spared the Nobles from divorce.

Of course, the listening audience knew that once the current crisis had been resolved and the couple reunited, it wouldn't be long before some star-crazed dame would be chasing after Larry's coattails again, driving a new wedge between the erstwhile happy pair.

In one episode, Larry sheepishly returned home late at night, having spent long hours with a "wealthy benefactress" who was footing the bill for his current play. Mary waited up for him. Unlike some wives in similar situations, however, Mary was typically supportive, forgiving,

comforting and ready with his slippers so her husband could sit and relax in his favorite easy chair. Meanwhile, Larry -- misguided fool that he was -- convinced himself that, behind his back, Mary was running after playwright Eric Jackson. She assured him, however, perhaps for the umpteenth jillionth time: "Just keep telling yourself that I've never cared for anyone but you." Millions of listeners knew she spoke the truth. But Larry just didn't get it.

Within moments, having come home apologetically, he was questioning his faithful spouse, doubting her motives. Then, seeing a thick envelope she had set aside to mail to Eric Jackson, fire spewed from his nostrils as he exclaimed: "I've been a fool all over again. Sorry I walked in unexpectedly and interfered with your romance by picking up your letter! What letters! How much you must have to say!" He stormed out of the house, unwilling to hear Mary's explanation that she was returning a play Jackson had given her because she did not want any involvement with him. In an episode that began with the prospect of Mary and Larry mending their rift, the gap seemed wider than ever by the end of the quarter-hour.

There were three Marys during the series' long run -- Lucy Gilman, Vivian Fridell and Claire Niesen. Niesen is probably the one best remembered or she carried the role for most of the decades of the 40s and 50s. She brought an empathy to the part that exuded virtue, selflessness, devotion, compassion and tenderness. From it, her audience developed a sympathetic ear for Mary. This must have figured into the high Hooper and Nielsen ratings that *Wife* consistently enjoyed. Among Niesen's other radio credits were lead roles in *The O'Neills*, *The Second Mrs. Burton* and *We Who Dream*. Born in Phoenix, Arizona, she died at 43 in 1963 at Encino, California.

A trio of actors played the part of Larry Noble -- Ken Griffin, James Meighan and Guy Sorel. The one inextricably linked with the role was Meighan. A veteran radio actor, Meighan's identifiable basso profundo won him lead roles on at least nine other long-running radio series: *Dot and Will*, *The Falcon*, *Flash Gordon*, *Gentleman Adventurer*, *Lora Lawton*, *Marie the Little French Princess*, *Orphans of Divorce*, *Peggy's Doctor* and *Special Agent*. On most days when he finished his part as Larry Noble, Meighan slipped into another NBC studio to rehearse *Just Plain Bill*. For nearly two decades he played Bill Davidson's son-in-law, Kerry Donovan. One didn't have to listen long to radio drama before hearing Meighan somewhere on the dial. Born in New York City, he died at Huntington, New York in 1970 at the age of 63.

At least two other recurring roles were prominently featured in *Wife's* plots. Both were friendly to the Nobles.

Aging, matronly character actress Maude Marlowe, who sometimes lived with the Nobles at their Rosehaven, Long Island home, was one. Larry's best friend, playwright Tom Bryson, for whom the Nobles maintained a permanent guest room, was the other. They defended the honor of Mary and Larry before all who would destroy them. Thus, they gained the devotion of the Nobles and, undoubtedly, millions of listeners who would cheer anyone that could release the couple from their hopeless despair, even temporarily.

Real life actresses Henrietta Tedro and Ethel Wilson played quick-spoken Maude. The part of Tom was carried in succession by Frank Dane, Charles Webster and Mandel Kramer.

Another regular in the plot was more often mentioned than heard -- the Nobles' young son, Larry Jr., portrayed in a childlike voice by actress Wilda Hinkel.

In the late 40s one of the hussies who sought to break up the Noble home and claim the breadwinner for herself was wealthy Regina Rawlings. Rawlings financed a Broadway play in which Larry was to star. She believed that gave her the right to have him answer her every whim. In time, she became so infatuated with him that she purchased a parcel of land less than a mile from the Noble home. Upon moving into the mansion she built on it, Rawlings confided one day to her maid that she would resort to violence and stop at nothing -- "absolutely nothing, do you hear?" -- to rid herself of Mary Noble so she could have the undivided attention of Larry. By the spring of 1948, she imported a suspiciously sinister man whom she identified as her cousin, Arthur Duncan. In no uncertain terms, he allowed that he would "do what I can to help you get rid of Mary Noble." The plot thickened and millions listened for weeks to determine how Mary's strengths and Larry's weaknesses would collide.

The part of Regina Rawlings was played by actress Anne Burr who had something of a penchant for making life hell for Mary Noble. Burr undoubtedly made a hit with *Wife's* producers. A short time after her character was written out of the script, she reappeared as aspiring actress Claudia Vincent, yet another paramour seeking the affections of Larry. This time, to Mary's dismay, Larry invited Claudia to move under the Nobles' roof. For months she brought as much grief to Mary as any woman ever had. In fact, one day a character in the story line compared Claudia Vincent to Regina Rawlings, the earlier seductress. Perhaps by then listeners had forgotten the similarities in both technique and voice.

Backstage Wife had its origins in the soap opera assembly line of Frank and Anne Hummert, the indomitable pair who produced far more radio serials than anyone else. The show was penned by Elizabeth Todd, Phil Thome, Ned Calmer and Ruth Borden.

Beginning as a sustaining feature on Mutual, *Wife*, at its transfer to NBC Blue a short time later, attracted a sponsor -- Sterling Drugs -- that would underwrite it for the next 15 years. When Sterling relinquished sponsorship in 1951, Procter & Gamble took over. Until then, announcer Ford Bond extolled the virtues of Sterling's household names, including Lyons toothpaste and Dr. Lyons tooth powder, Haley's M-O, Energine Shoe White and Energine cleaning fluid, Bayer aspirin, Phillips milk of magnesia, Astring-O-Sol mouthwash and Mulsified Coconut Oil shampoo.

After delivering those newspapers and keeping up with the Nobles for so long, I finally realized that I, too, was hooked on the drama. When I moved to a more lucrative morning newspaper route, I returned home from school and flipped my radio to the NBC station to once again hear the foibles of Mary Noble. It all began because nobody had air conditioning, the homemakers were at home and radio was still just about everybody's link with the outside world. Thus, by chance I happened upon the noblest of all the radio heroines -- in name and in deed.

A HISTORY OF SOUND EFFECTS

by Robert L. Mott



NARA member Bob Mott has had a long and distinguished career in both network radio and TV. He handled sound effects for such shows as *Gangbusters*, *Phillip Morris Playhouse*, the *Ed Sullivan Show* on TV, and the *Tonight Show*. He also was a writer for *Red Skelton*, *Dick VanDyke*, and *Andy Williams*, among others. He has written two books which you can order directly from the publishers: *RADIO SOUND EFFECTS* (ISBN #0-89950-747-6) for \$41.95 which includes shipping from McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 (910 246-4460) *AND SOUND EFFECTS: RADIO, TV, AND FILM* (ISBN #0-240-80029-X) for \$46.95, including shipping, from Focal Press, 225 Wildwood Ave., Woburn, MA 01801.

Radio drama has been accurately described as "the theater of the mind," and the success or failure of any given program was in direct relationship to its ability to involve the radio listener's imagination.

The listening audience gave little thought to the ages or appearances of those early radio actors. The important concern was, what did their voice make them sound like? It was for this reason that balding, middle-aged men could portray young, virile Adonises, while women very often played the parts written for both young girls and boys. But the epitome of adaptability was reached on the old radio show *Beulah*. On this highly rated show, the starring role of the black maid was successfully played by a white man!

If radio was the "theater of the mind," it most certainly was also "the drama of deceit." And yet, as magical as all those versatile voices were, there was an element lacking that radio desperately needed if it was going to make its dramatic shows more realistic

and exciting. It was one thing to tell a story using clever dialogue, spoken by talented actors, but unless the audience could visualize what these disembodied voices were actually doing and where the scenes were taking place, it soon became very confusing.

In those early days, some critics compared listening to a dramatic show on radio with attending the theater blindfolded. Although this was a rather extreme commentary on an industry so young, there was enough truth in it to make the champions of radio wince. And yet, radio was asking a great deal from its listeners. Unlike the familiar theater, audiences were without the enormous benefit of seeing what the actors were doing. With radio, all the action had to be implied with the actors' dialogue.

Training people to work in this new and mysterious medium was slow and arduous. For that reason, radio began drawing upon the experienced people in the theater for much of their talent.

Although this seemed like an excellent solution, it actually created some new problems. Actors who spent years honing their skills to be able to convey emotions by a slump of the shoulder or an arched eyebrow found these physical movements of little value to an unseeing audience. Furthermore, the rich, resonant voices that could be heard in the last row of the balcony now had to be retrained to comply with the demands of a mysterious electronic gadget called a microphone.

Even the writers from the theater were finding it difficult to make the transition. They too were accustomed to the visual contributions the actors made to prevent the monotony of putting everything into words. And just how long would radio audiences keep accepting such dialogue as, "Isn't that John's car I just heard drive up?" Especially when they never heard the sound of John's car. Yes, this was indeed an extremely painful growing period for radio.

When actors in the theater are late with their entrances or are slow in delivering lines, it is called a "stage wait." Although these moments are awkward, they are hardly a reason for the audience to leave the theater en masse in search of another play. Yet this was precisely the case with radio's listening audience.

Because of the newness of the medium, many of the technical problems had yet to be worked out. This was true both in the actual transmission of the programs and in the questionable reliability of the home receivers. Even the atmospheric conditions had an influence on how well you received certain programs. During thunderstorms,

most stations were either silent or transmitted such loud, annoying static that hearing four favorite programs was impossible. As a result of these and other transmission and reception problems, any silence that extended beyond a few seconds caused an anxious listener to dial to another station to see if this expensive new gadget was still operating properly. After all, this was the era of the Great Depression, and money didn't grow on trees! Even today, when your television set loses its audio, see how quickly the station flashes a "please stand by" card. This is to assure you that there is nothing wrong with your receiver and to dissuade you from turning to another channel. But what could radio do when it lost its sound?

One thing radio station owners and producers didn't want was to have their valued listeners tuning to competing stations to see if it was the fault of their radio or the station they were listening to. After all, prospective advertisers were being enticed away from the printed media by promises of a guaranteed listening audience. . . and they better deliver!

Therefore, silence was to be avoided at all costs. And much to the distress of the already beleaguered actors, directors, and writers, this included any extended dramatic pauses that were so much of a part of everyone's training in the theater. Now, in radio, these tools were referred to unceremoniously as "dead air!" This fear of silence was so acute that worried station owners paid a house musician to be on constant emergency studio standby. If there was any delay or silence that extended beyond

what could be logically justified, organ music filled the airways to assuage the home listeners and to assure them that everything was just fine in radioland.

Radio's preoccupation with a constant "something" being on the air was becoming annoying to an audience that was accustomed to forms of entertainment where they knew exactly what was going on at all times. The novelty of hearing music and voices "magically without any wires" was beginning to pall. Now they wanted to be entertained.

As radio scurried desperately about to fill this need, it made a rather obvious but nevertheless startling discovery. Up until now radio had been so preoccupied with imitating the more familiar forms of entertainment found in the theater that it hadn't had time to realize that what radio had to offer was unique. Unlike the theater, radio didn't need expensive and elaborate costumes. It didn't need makeup or props. It didn't even need scenery or exotic locations. Radio had something better . . . the listener's imagination! All radio had to do to avail itself of this magical world of fantasy was to create images through the suggestion of sound. After all, if a white man could convincingly portray the part of a black woman simply by the way he made his voice sound, why couldn't this illusion be applied to *things*?

Ironically, when it was decided to use sound effects on radio, it also was discovered that there was virtually no one in broadcasting with either the necessary experience or equipment. As a result, early radio again turned to the theater. As primitive as the



The author handling sound effects on the Captain Kangaroo television show.

sounds were, they served the theater very well. One reason for their success was the fact that the sounds were always accompanied by some visual special effect. If a scene called for a storm to be raging outside, the sounds of wind and thunder were accompanied by offstage fans blowing the window curtains while flashing lights indicated lightning. Radio had none of these advantages and therefore the sounds had to be done in such a manner as to be self explanatory to the listening audience. As a result, the artists were always searching for new and better sounds.

The two people most responsible for developing sound effects (SFX) into an art form in radio and for training others were Ora Nichols, CBS, New York, and Lloyd Creekmore, KHJ, Hollywood. It was a difficult job at best. Radio had very quickly outgrown many of the early efforts because of their lack of realism. What had been appropriate for the large theaters was either too broad or unconvincing for the intimacy of radio.

During this transitional period, radio, out of a lack of technical equipment, began relying heavily on the actual effects for its sounds. If the script called for the sound of a coffee pot, the artist actually used a coffee pot. There were several reasons for this, the most important being that the artists still had not developed the art of successfully substituting one sound for another. It therefore followed that if the director saw the artist using a coffee pot for the sound of a coffee pot, how could he or she complain about the resultant sound? The problem was that in trying to satisfy all these culinary script needs, the artist had to practically set up housekeeping in the studio! The practice of using the actual effect to produce its own sound was both convenient and relatively successful in those early days. It was also only temporary. The demand for new sounds was increasing at such an alarming rate that the burgeoning shelves in the sound effects rooms began to fill and spill over.

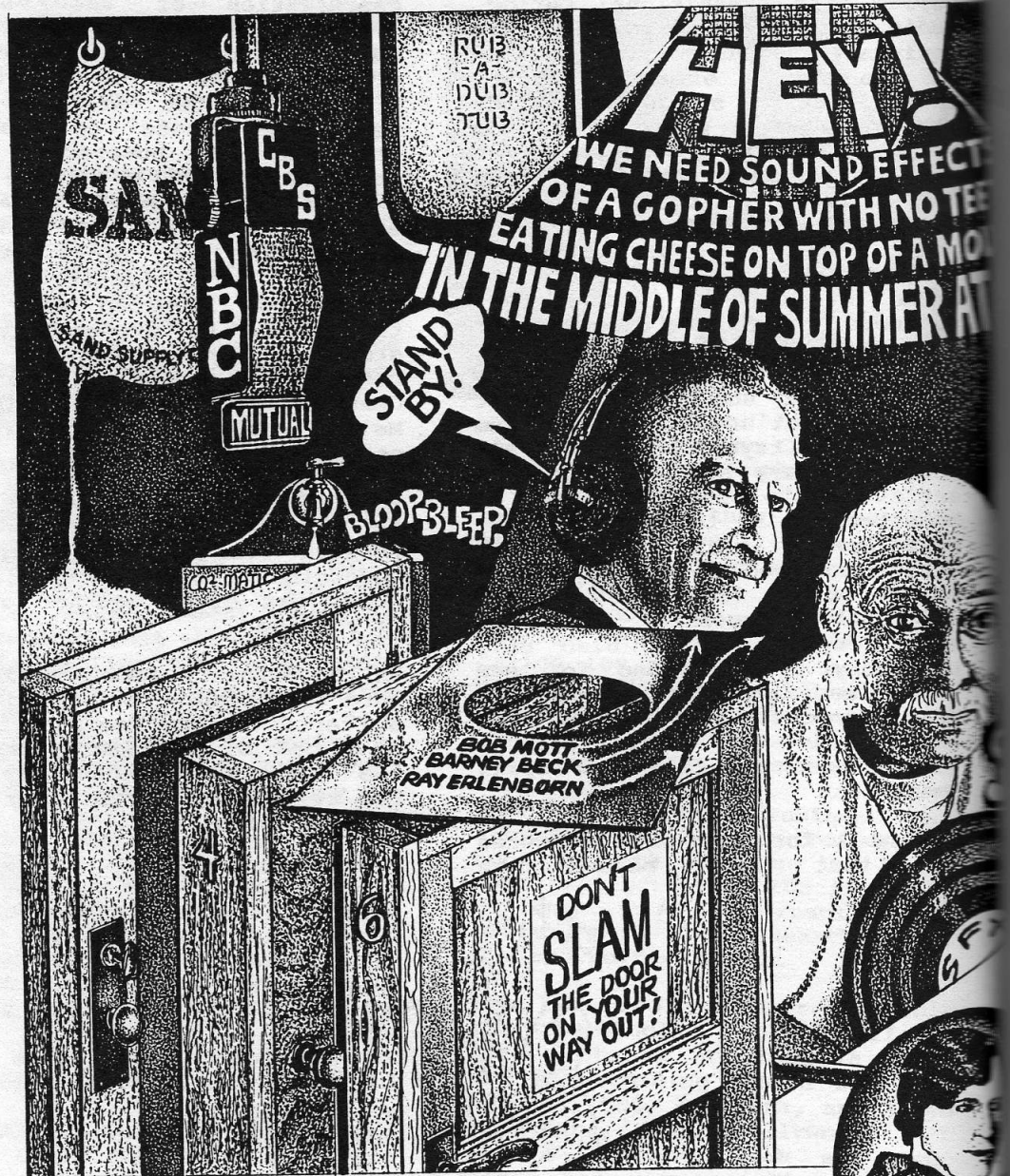
The need for more sophisticated SFX that were beyond the

capabilities of the manually produced sounds of the theater was becoming an increasing problem in the early 1930's. As a result, the artists began recording sounds on records. This was not, however, a total solution to the problem. Sound recorders in those days were approximately the same size and weight of a large washing machine. As a result, most of the sounds recorded were those that could be produced in the studio. Fortunately, large commercial companies such as Gennet, Standard, Speedy-Q, and Major also recognized radio's need for new and unusual sounds and adapted equipment that enabled them to go into the field to record realistic sounds. Because of the subsequent recording of actual sounds, radio drama was given another element of realism.

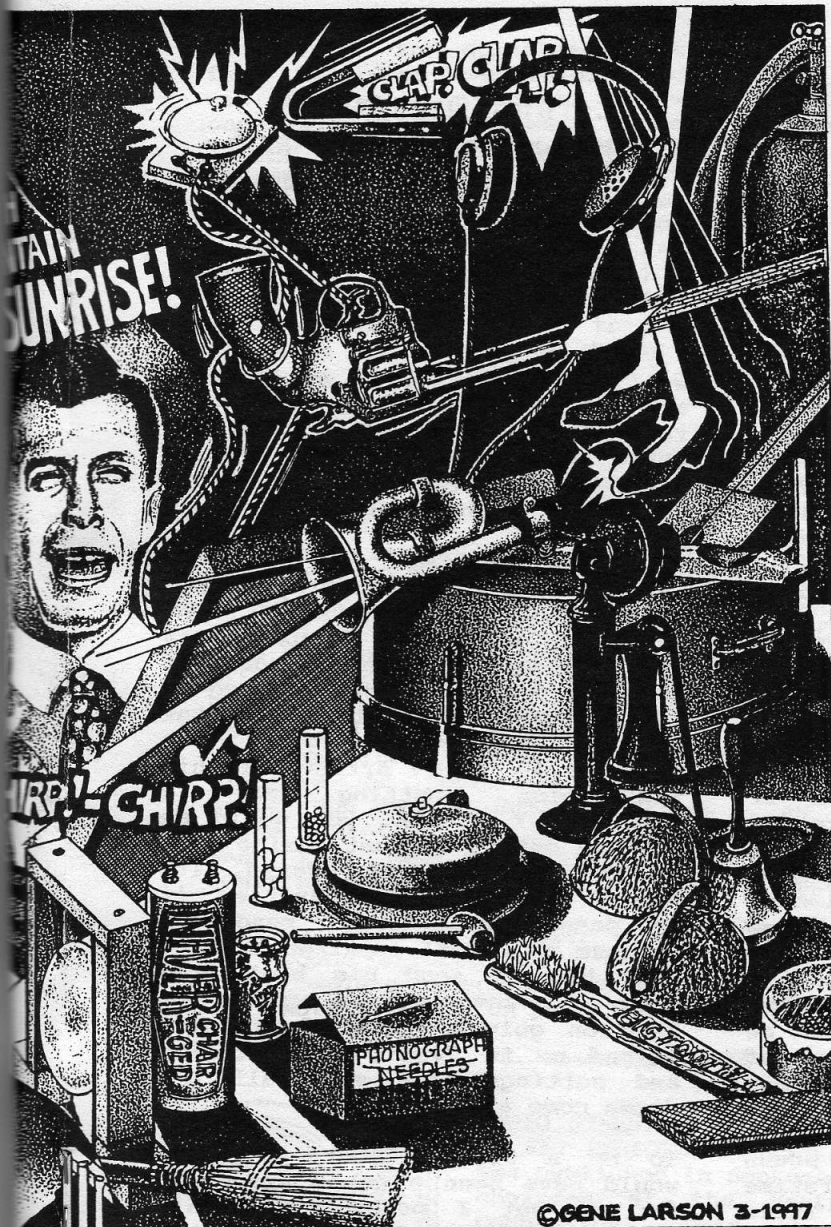
As the actors became familiar and more comfortable working with the SFX artist, they realized it was a method of reclaiming some of the theatrical techniques they had relinquished when they first entered radio.



"Stop, Malone, stop--you're breaking my arm!"

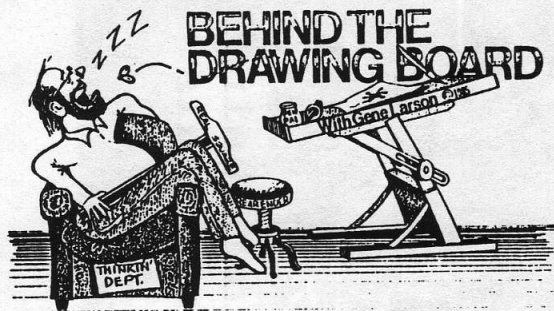


A TRIBUTE TO THE SOUND EFFECTS FOLK!



RADIO'S UNSUNG HEROES!
(INSPIRED BY "RADIO SOUND EFFECTS"
THE BOOK: - ROBERT L. MOTT -)

Our centerfold, this time, is by our staff artist, Gene Larson. It shows three of our NARA members in their "younger" years. An article about this drawing can be found on pages 27 and 28.



**SOUND EFFECTS:
THE AMMUNITION FOR
"THEATER OF THE MIND"**

by
Gene Larson

You may not have given thought to what vintage radio would have been like if all of your favorite programs were performed without embellishments. Sound effects, that is. A rough analogy would be what is known today as "audio books." Narration only. Just think: "Captain Midnight" would've been "CAPTAIN MIDAIR" without the sound of his plane diving around and droning-in for a landing....."The Shadow" would not have been "invisible" to us without that phone-filtered voice....."Fibber McGee's Closet" would have just been dead-air if you'd even been able to pretend that it was opened in the first place. Those sound effects made everything "happen!" Including our lasting memories of what we "saw" as our very own images.

Without the geniuses behind those effects I dare say there would be no such thing as our "theater of the mind." I can't tell you how happy I felt when I read in the WINTER 1997 issue of NARA NEWS that three of those noted sound effects folks were given "Lifetime Achievement" awards for their dedication to vintage broadcasting. AND they are NARA members! I could only SHOW you how I felt by doing an illustration (the centerfold on pages 25 and 26) honoring these three men, with some whimsy as

well. Not only was it my pleasure to highlight these gentlemen, but to make them representative of all those hard-working people who we sort of took for granted in the years of live broadcasting.

I was inspired to do the illustration after reading Robert Mott's fantastic book "RADIO SOUND EFFECTS" which I think every vintage radio buff should read. I was also motivated from reading of their awards and by the fact that it was about time to try to prove my worth as "Staff Artist" of this publication. Getting back to Robert Mott's book, you would be missing out on a great inside look at the sound effects world, its hopes, hells, and hilarities if you pass it up. I don't read much because of visual impairment but I just HAD to read his book from cover to cover....and wanted to keep on going! Lots of pictures helped me to "visit" the studios and settings that made all the drama come alive.

To be a sound effects engineer would have been a great adventure for me but I probably wouldn't have had the mind to invent the effects those folks had to back then. Sometimes right "on the spot" too, with air time imminent. By the time I entered radio broadcasting sound effects were pretty-much amassed in recorded

libraries. The downside was the fact that not everything needed was available on discs. I was once able to do a "claxon" (Model T) horn better than a recording because it was "live." The other day I tried it again and almost choked to death on my shriveled-up vocal cord! (It seems age takes its toll on some things.) I could also simulate a semi-truck air horn but if I tried that now I'd have to have a net handy to catch my teeth! As with the last effect mentioned, I could do others at one time but old age has made them things of the past. (Back to the recordings....)

In 1994 I "met" Ray Erlenborn through a letter after I had put out a plea for the method of doing a certain sound effect from radio's Golden Years. It took some back and forth communications with Ray for me to "get it right" but he was a very kind and patient man. (Hey thanks, Ray!) Unfortunately, I haven't had the pleasure of communicating with either Bob Mott or Barney Beck but maybe I'll have to HIDE from them when they see my illustration. (Only having fun, boys!)

It was very interesting to note from Mr. Mott's book that a husband and wife team brought sound effects to radio and the lady went on to form a staff of sound effects personnel as radio became more popular. She is the Ora Nichols depicted in the illustration as the "1st Lady of sound effects" and I thought it important to include her. Ladies played a very important part in the sound effects world.

Even though I'm not able to attend them, I'm glad the radio conventions exist today that recreate live programs and demonstrate the many crafts involved in making programs work. The power of the voice is phenomenal....a few from early radio days can be heard today as voice-overs on television and when I hear one of them, no matter what they are advertising, a certain old-radio program represented by that voice pops into my mind! And the "voices" of all of those sound effects will always be remembered as the backbone of the many dramatic, variety, and comedy shows which remain embedded in our memories.

In the above article, Gene Larson has mentioned one of the two sound effects books written by Robert Mott. You can find complete ordering information on each of these at the start of Mott's column on page 21.



NEW BOOK

RADIO STARS: AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF 953 PERFORMERS, 1920 - 1960 by Thomas A. DeLong was published in September, 1996. The author is the chairman of the Westport School of Music in Connecticut. This 328 page book, as the title says, gives a brief biographical sketch of almost a thousand OTR personalities with pictures of nearly a third of them. NARA members Jack French, Jay Hickerson, and Barbara Watkins were contributors to this book. It can be ordered, by credit card, for \$59.50 plus shipping from the publisher, McFarland & Company - (800) 253-2187.

OTR Meets the Internet Part II

Lou Genco
(lgenco@old-time.com)

It has been a while since my last article on Old-Time Radio and the Internet, and several good things have happened in the interim. First, the World-Wide Web (WWW) has attracted even more sites and users, and second, more folks are contacting Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to get access to the WWW.

NARA News readers who have been thinking about getting access to the WWW probably have several questions about how this relatively new electronic medium can benefit them. This article is a very brief summary of how to get on the Internet, and what OTR attractions might be found there.

- ***What is the difference between the Internet and the World-Wide Web?***

The Internet consists of a large number of computers, linked together with telephone lines, fiber optics bundles and satellite links. They all share common *protocols*, which allow them to "talk together", no matter what operating system they use or how slow or fast their connection.

The World-Wide Web is based on one of these protocols (called "HTTP", or "HyperText Transfer Protocol"), and allows software (called "Browsers") to present text, images and sounds to folks accessing WWW pages. Two very popular browsers are Netscape's Navigator® and Microsoft's Internet Explorer®. Both of these browsers are available at no cost to many individuals, and Internet Explorer is bundled with Microsoft's Windows® software.

In addition to allowing users to view and hear WWW pages, each of the abovementioned browsers also allows users to send and receive electronic mail (email) and read and post messages on various electronic newsgroups.

- ***What do I need to get on the Internet?***

The minimum equipment you will need is a computer, a modem, and appropriate software. Once you have this equipment, you will need to find an Internet Service Provider (ISP) that you can access with your modem. Most ISPs provide any necessary software you may need, and many of them offer advice on how to hook up your hardware.

Since the Internet has been around for a couple of decades, it will accept hookups from even very old and very slow personal computers. For most efficient use of the WWW, however, you will need a fairly fast modem (14.4 K or better), and a computer equivalent to a "286" or better. Most personal computers built in the last eight years or so meet these requirements, and 14.4 K modems can cost around \$50 or less..

- ***What should I look for in an ISP?***

There are three basic types of ISP:

1. Online Services (America Online, Microsoft Network, Compuserve, etc)
2. National ISPs (AT&T Worldnet, Sprint, Netcom, etc.)
3. Local ISPs (names vary by local area)

Online services usually offer both internet access and "local" newsgroups and chat areas. They all seem to have some kind of periodic "free" or low-cost signup period, so they might be useful for folks who are unsure about what is offered on the Internet, and want the opportunity for lots of assistance as they find their way around. National ISPs offer access to the Internet, but usually have few local, extra services (other than telephone support). Local ISPs offer access to the internet.

When shopping for an ISP, check the following:

- Price (flat rate of \$20 or less per month is about average)
 - Local Phone call (don't pay extra for toll calls!)
 - Number of users per modem (your ISP should guarantee they have eight or fewer users for each of their modems. Larger numbers of users per modem will result in busy signals.)
 - Support services (is a human available at a "help" number?)
 - Software (will the ISP supply software, or are you expected to have it?)
- ***What OTR related materials are available on the Internet?***

To name a few: OTR biographies, bibliographies, bulletin boards, critiques, chat group, news articles, sound bytes, entire programs, program logs, pictures, tape trades / sales, radio stations and schedules, club notices, trivia quizzes, historical information, research materials, and much more.

Since my last article, several private and commercial OTR-related sites have been added to the growing list of WWW pages that provide OTR, and their material is updated sufficiently frequently that folks can usually find new material, no matter how frequently they wander the Web.

- **Where can I find OTR related things on the WWW?**

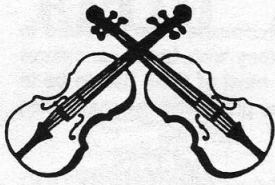
Once you log into the WWW, you can access any of the several *Indices* that try to keep track of the many pages on the Internet. One of the popular index pages is located at www.yahoo.com. You can enter keywords, such as "old time radio", and soon see a large list of WWW pages that meet your criteria.

Remember, not all web pages are created equal. Some are excellent blends of imagery, text and sounds; others are simple pages stating that their creator has an interest in OTR. Three pages that seem to have a good mix of *information* and imagery or sounds are:

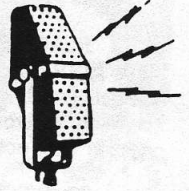
The Original Old-Time Radio WWW Page: www.old-time.com
Radio Days: A Sound-Byte History: www.otr.com
The Vintage Radio Page: www.members.aol.com/radiolog/history.htm

Once you access any of these sites, you will find pointers to many other OTR related pages, accessible by a mere click of your mouse, as well as email addresses of many OTR and/or WWW experts who are willing to help new folks to the hobby.





From
JACK PALMER



TIDBITS FROM OLD TIME RADIO

In researching my articles for this column I spend a lot of time looking through as many early radio news magazines as I can find. Occasionally I run across an interesting or unusual item, which doesn't fit into what I'm writing about, but which catches my eye and I note it down for possible future use. I now have quite a few of these tidbits and I thought I'd share a few of them with you.

DR. BRINKLEY. As mentioned in Jim Snyder's article a few issues back, Dr. Brinkley owned a radio station in Kansas before heading for the border. In May 1931, Radio Digest announced that his station, KFKB, had been voted the most popular radio station in the United States with over 250,000 votes. The magazine included a picture of Dr. Brinkley with his son. They were still quite respectable in those days.

FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY. In 1931 Marian and Jim Jordan were still singing for a living. Two different 1931 issues of Radio Digest contained photographs of Marian at the piano with Jim standing nearby ready to sing.

BERNARDINE FLYNN. Two glamorous photographs of this lady appeared in the September 1931 issue of Radio Digest, with a short article about a very talented radio actress. It mentioned her dramatic roles, but no mention of **VIC AND SADE**, the program with which she would become forever identified. That was still in her future.

PICKARD FAMILY. Although I wrote about this group earlier, the March 1931 Radio Digest stated they were now appearing in a new show on NBC. The program was named Southern Folk Songs and was broadcast every Friday night. I had not known about this show when I previously wrote about their early radio appearances.

CRICKET MOUNTAINEERS. A 1930 issue of the same magazine included a photograph of this group with the statement they were appearing on CBS during the 1929-30 season. A group I completely missed in my earlier list of country music pioneers. But judging by their photograph, they are definitely country.

REX COLE MOUNTAINEERS. This group was appearing on NBC according to a November 1930 issue of the Radio Digest. This is another group I had no record of until I saw this notice. There is a possibility this could be the same group that appeared on a program called MOUNTAINEERS MUSIC, which I indicated was on NBC in 1931.

VARIETY PROGRAMS. According to the March 1934 issue of Radio Stars, the first coast-to-coast network radio variety program was RADIO FOLLIES, broadcast in September 1930.

NATIONAL FARM AND HOME HOUR. This program, which was on the air for 30 years, seems to be overlooked by most OTR fans today. It was listened to religiously by millions of people (not all farmers) every day and received many awards. The March 1934 issue of Radio Stars has a long article on the program and includes a letter from Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace (anyone remember him?) congratulating the program on the great job it was doing keeping the American farmer informed. Incidentally, the program was not all news, but also featured comedy and musical acts.

AMOS AND ANDY. In 1929 and 1930 almost every issue of Radio Digest contained one, and often two, articles on this program, attesting to its popularity. In the August issue a discussion of the program concluded that most Negroes (their term) listened to the program and enjoyed it. They did not mention the probability that this was because it was the only program on the air that African-Americans could even remotely relate to.


BLACK-FACE COMEDIANS. I was astounded by the large number of black-face comedians on the radio in the 1929-1931 time frame. Not even close to the low key comedy of AMOS AND ANDY, they were broad caricatures and deliberately played up every conceived ethnic trait strictly for humor. It seemed that most of them had to be in black-face to broadcast. Were we really so naive as to think they were funny? The jokes printed in the magazines certainly were not.

TRANSCRIPTIONS. A photo in the September 1931 issue of Radio Digest pictured the cast of HOLLYWOOD RADIO NEWSREEL making a radio broadcast disc (also called an electrical transcription in the accompanying article) for the program. The article covers in great detail how the transcription was made and why the program used transcriptions instead of live broadcasts. The recordings used the same methods and the same 16 inch discs then being used by the movie industry in making their "talkies." The article claimed that one reason many movie stars did not appear on radio was because they couldn't fit the live radio broadcasts into their schedules. So the recordings were used to catch the movie stars during their free time.

TELEVISION. There were articles on television in almost every issue of the radio magazines. And most of the articles implied it was just around the corner. In fact, in September 1931 Radio Digest announced that 22 stations were already broadcasting television programs, although usually only an hour or so a day. There were 25,000 television receivers already scattered across the continent. The same issue had Betty Ross on the cover as the Radio Digest Television Girl. She could be seen on station W2XCR. With a headline that read "Television is Here," Radio Digest goes on the state, "Let's be frank and admit it. Television is here..... In another year you will find not less than 100,000 television receiving sets throughout the country."

Of course that never happened, but what if it had? If so, it would have been very unlikely that most of the golden age of radio would have ever happened. The money would have gone into television instead of radio just as it did 20 years later.

I would also like to mention that Wilf Carter, one of the early country music artists mentioned in a previous column, passed away on 5 December 1996, only a few days short of his 92nd birthday. Using the name Montana Slim, he had a daily program on CBS for several years beginning in 1934. He also appeared on the Grand Ole Opry and on Canadian radio and TV. He recorded for RCA for almost 50 years.



**NARA's
25th
ANNIVERSARY**

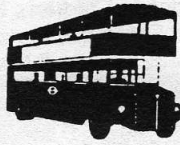
**SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY
OFFER**

The date was June 2, 1973. The event was the first banquet of the new NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, LTD. The featured guest was Carleton E. Morse. The Banquet was held at the Cathay House in San Francisco. This historic event was recorded on two cassettes which are available to NARA members as a 25th Anniversary Special. They can be yours, as a member of NARA, for a donation of \$25.00 or more. The cassettes come in a vinyl bookshelf binder with the special logo of the North American Radio Archives, Ltd. on the cover. Send your special donation to:

THE NORTH AMERICAN RADIO ARCHIVES, LTD.
P.O. BOX 1392
LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA 92531

Your special commemorative edition of the banquet honoring Carleton E. Morse will be sent to you via U.P.S. Send NARA your donation right away.

FROM ACROSS THE POND



by Ray Smith



THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

In this, the 25th anniversary year of NARA, no columnist worth his weight in words and commas could possibly let such a splendid occasion go by without a special mention. In the UK where they give things the Royal touch, this would be referred to as NARA's Silver Jubilee.

Actually, I used to be known as the Anniversary Kid. I remember receiving a nice card from my bank manager. "It's the 25th anniversary of your house mortgage," he advised. "Just wanted to remind you that it's STILL not paid off!!" Then there was the 3 a.m. overseas phone call from my old school buddy, Malcolm. "Congratulations Ray," said he cheerfully. He was blissfully unaware, sitting down to his 10 a.m. "tea-break" that I'd just got to sleep after being awake into the wee small hours nursing the cat, which had toothache. "Kittikins" was by now deep in the arms of Morpheus, but not "Joe Muggins" here. "Malcolm, what an unusual surprise!" Meaning, what IDIOT would wake me at 3 a.m.? "Ray," he went on, "just wanted to remind you. It's the 25th anniversary of the day you fell into Craigie Burn!" (This was a small stream which flowed into Scotland's famous River Tay.)

As 12 year olds we dared each other to jump across the modest stream when the water was in full flood. Being the gang-member with the shortest legs, I'd waited till everyone else landed on the other bank. Then I "charged" like Braveheart taking on the English. But I couldn't stop and instead of soaring from one bank to the other, I literally "ran" through the water to the other side, fully clothed. It was quite shallow, really...just enough to freeze my nether-regions. But in my hometown, they were still talking about it (and having a good laugh!) 25 years on.

This time 25 years ago, I was about to return from a trip to the UK. And the last radio program I heard

before hopping aboard a plane at Heathrow Airport, was a tribute to the wireless show upon which several generations of British youngsters (including yours truly) were weaned. Although it actually ran between 5 p.m. and 5:55 p.m. every evening of the year, the program was called The Children's Hour. I guess the BBC and I won't split hairs about the missing 5 minutes, given over to 300 exciting seconds of entertainment known as, "The Shipping Forecast."



"Jennings At School"

a

Children's Hour Favourite

The Children's Hour was heard on the BBC Home Service. This meant that its "network" offerings could be enjoyed by a national audience in the tens of millions, whereas the various BBC Regions (Scotland, Wales and the West, North of England, Midlands, London, etc.) could "breakaway" for their own localized programming.

The Children's Hour wasn't one single program. It was an "umbrella" designed to accommodate an incredible array of music, drama, quiz, comedy, education and adventure programming, geared as they say, to "children of all ages," but especially for those between 4 and 15. Obviously that age range wouldn't work today!

Each region had its own Children's Hour "Organiser" (chief producer). Unlike the producers in charge of the Beeps (BBC) adult programs, the Organisers played a major role in day to day broadcasting, announcing each feature, reading stories and signing off. Each Organiser became known as an Auntie or Uncle to the listening youngsters.

Mention Uncle David to Londoners and they think of David Davis, who read delightful stories like *The Wind In the Willows*, and played Larry the Lamb in *Toytown*. One of Uncle David's best-loved productions was *Jennings At School*, the tale of two schoolboys, Jennings and Derbyshire, who were at odds with their nemesis, Mr. Wilkinson! Down through the years there have been many radio versions of *Sherlock Holmes*. Few were as exciting as those produced originally by Uncle David for Children's Hour starting in 1952, and featuring Carlton (Hobbo) Hobbs as Holmes and Norman Shelley as Watson. I still refer to that series as "The Definitive *Sherlock Holmes*."



Carlton (Hobbo) Hobbs
"*Sherlock 'Olmes*"

One of my favorite Children's Hour features came from the North of England Region. "Nursery Sing Song" was introduced by Northern "Uncles" Trevor Hill and Herbert Smith. The Auntie on the program played piano brilliantly and had a beautiful soprano voice. I grew up listening to Auntie Vi (Violet) singing songs like "Soldier, Soldier, will you marry me." To millions of Children's Hour fans Auntie Vi was the sweetest lady on the wireless. You can imagine our shock and horror some years later, when Granada TV's *Coronation Street* (soap opera) began. There she was, the meanest-looking, meanest-acting, meanest-sounding old battleaxe on British TV...a beer

swilling, pub loving, old harridan known as Ena Sharples. What HAD they done to Children's Hour's beautiful Auntie Vi, a.k.a. Violet Carson?



Violet Carson
TV's *Ena Sharples* (left)
and radio's *Auntie Vi*

Other fondly-remembered Children's Hour features include Norman and Henry Bones the boy detectives, *Children's Newsreel*, *Radio Circle*, *Romany*, and *Nature Parliament*. From 1955 until 1962 we listened to a cliff-hanging weekly adventure series *Counterspy*, produced by BBC Wales and starring Michael Aspell, who later became a favorite UK talk-show host. I wonder how today's kids would accept the character portrayed by Aspell on that serial, a tough security officer known as...Rocky Mountain!

But the Region which had the most prolific output of Children's Hour programs was BBC Scotland, where their chief Organiser was the legendary Miss Kathleen Garscadden, one of the best-loved names in UK radio. "Autie Kathleen" (or Auntie Cyclone as she was first known) really did provide radio nurture to generations of British children. She started with Children's Hour in 1922 and was still broadcasting to "the wee ones" in 1964.

While you may recall that Pythonesque movie, *A Fish Called Wanda*, I grew up listening to a fish called Tammy Troot (trout) whose stories written by Lavinia Derwent, were read by Scottish actor, Willy Joss. I used to think that Mr. Joss was one of the most distinguished "thespians" in Scottish broadcasting. You can imagine how surprised I was to learn that the voice of so many wireless characters of yore, actually worked in a wee "ironmongery" (hardware store) in Glasgow. But where there's fish, can cats

be far behind? Don Whyte told us "tales-in-rhyme" of a fearless Scottish "moggy" called Bran The Cat.

And even in those days, we grew up with a love of nature and the environment. The program featured a panel of experts answering listeners questions. If you came across a show with characters like Bird Man (Henry Douglas-Home) Zoo Man (Tom Gillespie) and Hut Man (James Fisher) you might unknowingly think that you'd stumbled upon a sci-fi drama. In fact, it was the highly informative and educational Nature Scrapbook, broadcast from Edinburgh Zoo.

And when it came to exciting adventure serials, Auntie Kathleen's Scottish productions were acclaimed throughout Britain. A Scottish Presbyterian minister, Angus MacVicar, was the prolific author of numerous Scottish adventure serials including The Lost Planet and The Red Planet, which attracted more adults than kids. Another favorite mystery was The Boys of Glen Morroch, which revolved around three Scottish teenagers who found crooks under every sprig of heather in the Scottish Highlands.

And my all-time favorite Scottish Children's Hour production was Down At the Mains, scripted by R. Gordon MacCallum and produced, naturally, by Auntie Kathleen. The weekly stories took place on a fictional dairy farm in the northeast of Scotland. Usually the program opened with a mini-drama...a favorite cow had got lost and the search was on...that type of thing. But they all lived happily ever after. The last half hour of the show was a Scottish ceilidh (kay-lee) or musical party, in the barn, complete with

traditional song, music, verse and folklore. The fictional Blairkindie Glee Club (in reality the Scottish Junior Singers) sang songs of the "Aunnie Laurie" ilk, while the jigs and reels were thumped out by a popular Scottish band, the Jim McLeod Trio.

Auntie Kathleen's Children's Hour was abruptly cancelled in 1964. The Scottish version of the program was the last to go, two years after it ended in the rest of Britain, amid storms of protest and a debate in Parliament. But by this time Beatlemania was sweeping the world. The teenagers of this generation clearly preferred John, Paul, George and Ringo, or the gyrating-hipped "Rolling Stones" to Tammy Troot and Rocky Mountain. But Children's Hour had a tremendous influence on our lives and helped prepare us for the big, wide and sometimes wicked world of adulthood.

Thanks to NARA, currently celebrating a well-deserved silver jubilee, we're able to remember a radio program which ended 40 years ago. And I'm certain that because of the dedication, commitment, loyalty and enthusiasm of everyone connected with this wonderful old tyme radio organization, people will STILL remember shows like Children's Hour, when NARA celebrates FIFTY glorious years!

I'm tempted to sign off as Auntie Kathleen Garscadden always did with her famous phrase, "Goodnight children...goodnight." But I can't compete with a legend, so I'll simply say...

Cheerio for now.



SOMETHING NEW

We are pleased to be able to announce a new service for the visually impaired. Bill Bright, a retired Canadian radio broadcaster, will be reading the material in each issue of the NARA NEWS and putting it on cassette to make it available to those with vision difficulties. Don Aston, NARA's secretary-treasurer, will duplicate the cassettes and put them in the mail to those who need this service. If you know of members, or prospective members, who would benefit from this, please contact Don at P.O. Box 1392, Lake Elsinore, CA 92531. He can be reached by phone at (909) 244-5242.

NARA NEWS NOW AVAILABLE **ON CASSETTE FOR THE** **VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

BOOK by Hal Stephenson SHELF

*His Typewriter Grew Spurs: A biography of Fran Striker
--writer. Documenting the Lone Ranger's ride on the
radiowaves of the world* by Fran Striker, Jr.



Fran was born August 19, 1903 in Buffalo, NY. He married Janet M. Gisel April 27, 1929. Their lifelong marriage produced four children--Bob, Don, the author, and a long-awaited daughter, Janet.

The Buffalo area would remain Fran's hometown including many summers at Fiction Farm near Arcade, NY. He and his family would live in Grosse Pointe, Michigan for many years while writing Lone Ranger stories that originated on station WXYZ in Detroit. Fran died in an automobile accident September 4, 1962. Fiction Farm was then sold to Child Evangelism Fellowship and became a Christian children's camp.

This 1983 biography provides detailed information assembled by a son, Fran (Jr.), upon the 50th anniversary of the Lone Ranger radio program. The 144-page 5-1/2 x 8-1/2 inch book includes many black and white photographs.

An addendum lists 43 series of radio dramas written by Fran, mostly before the Lone Ranger but some afterward such as the Green Hornet starting in January 1936 and Sergeant Preston--Challenge of the Yukon. Another addendum gives the script for Lone Ranger program #1 broadcast January 31, 1933. Fran typed his own scripts so he could spell words the way he wanted the actors to read them. There is a list of Fran's books including the eight Tom Quest books and a few about Roy Rogers and Gene Autry written under pseudonyms. The book concludes with a chronology of 1933-1955. For example "First premium offer, a popgun, 300 offered; 24,000 requests received."

Program #11 introduced Tonto. The character was needed because the narrator was required to play too big a role in explaining things to the listeners. The Indian's name was picked from an atlas, after Tonto Basin, Arizona. Tonto's first horse looked like Silver but was named White Feller. When a Lone Ranger movie was made, they couldn't have two white horses. The problem was solved in a broadcast in which White Feller injured his leg. Tonto left his injured horse with friendly Indians. Tonto got a paint horse which he named Scout.

I am among the many people who thought that "Kemo Sabay" (trusted friend) was only what Tonto called the Ranger. However, "in many early transcriptions both the Ranger and Tonto use Kemo Sabay when referring to each other." (p. 94)

The author confirms that the worst line his dad ever wrote was "I hear a white horse coming." (p. 72)

In all the years of broadcast, only two shows did not go on as scheduled. One show was pre-empted when President Franklin D. Roosevelt died and another on V-J Day--the end of World War II. The last broadcast was May 27, 1955.

Fran Striker in 1937

Fran Striker, Jr. offers his answer to the frequently asked question

"Who was that masked man?"

He was clean living and goodness, justice for all, the personification of those traits of character that every parent hopes their child will possess, when grown.

He was an American ideal...a characterization which lived in millions of children.

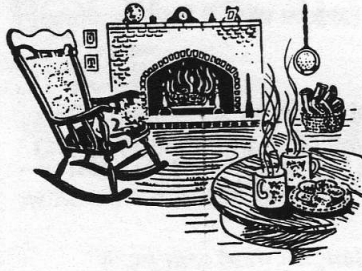
He was a touch of home to thousands of GI's at war throughout the world.

Today, he is a snapshot from childhood to generations of parents.

To some degree, that masked man is what each of us wants to make of him. He is a fantasy to some, a dream to others; a dream that became a legend. (p. 106)



Part of the dedication of this book is *to those who appreciated and grew to possess the very fiber ... of their heroes from childhood.*



VINTAGE RADIO RETURNS TO THE AIRWAVES AT NEW HAMPSHIRE BED & BREAKFAST

by
(NARA members)
Jayme and Laura Simoes

Imagine glowing tubes, the occasional crackle, and a gleaming dial. Listen, as classic radio shows emanate from a 1940's Philco at your bedside at a 200 year old New Hampshire B&B. At the Inn at Maplewood Farm, the first bed and breakfast with its own radio station, guests regularly tune in to the sounds of the past. It began in May 1995 when innkeepers Jayme and Laura Simoes started rebroadcasting radio shows from the 1920's-1950's, via low wattage transmitter, to vintage radios in all of their guest suites. A year later, "it was going like Ganbusters..."

Located in Hillsborough, New Hampshire, the Inn may look like a Currier and Ives print, but when it comes to radio it is strictly art deco. "At first, our guests found it a novelty. Then we noticed that they weren't leaving their rooms," explains Jayme. "They were silently discovering a medium they never knew existed."

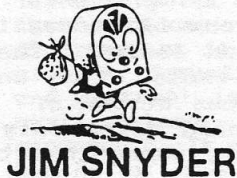
The voices of Fred Allen, Sam Spade, Captain Midnight, and the Green Hornet again emanate from bakelite radios, thanks to the Inn's low-power transmitter and the owners' collection of 1000 old radio shows. To further heighten the sentimental journey, the Inn has introduced special programming weekends with a different focus each month. In August, guests can revisit radio's great terror shows. In September guests can tune in to an entire broadcast day from 1939, and in October they will celebrate the anniversary of the War of the Worlds broadcast. Guests may listen in on one of several 1930's "cathedral" Philco radios in the Inn's parlor, or retreat to their rooms and enjoy a World War II era radio at their bedside.

Jayme, a Chicago native, has been collecting old radio shows and sets since the age of 13. Now 28 years old, he enjoys sharing his hobby with others. "The response to Radio Maplewood Farm has been overwhelming. What never ceases to amaze me is how little time it takes to get hooked. All it takes is imagination."

The town of Hillsborough was founded in the 1760's, and is best known for producing New Hampshire's only President, Franklin Pierce. The 1804 Pierce Homestead is just one of several important historic sites in this town of 4,000.

The Inn at Maplewood Farm, a AAA three diamond bed and breakfast, was built in 1794 and occupies 14 rural acres. The restored structure offers four non-smoking guest suites, and operates with an environmentally conscious agenda. Rates start at \$75 per suite, per night. Innkeepers, Laura and Jayme Simoes, can be reached at (603) 464-4242, or (800) 644-6695.

**Wireless
Wanderings**



AMERICAN INDIAN RADIO

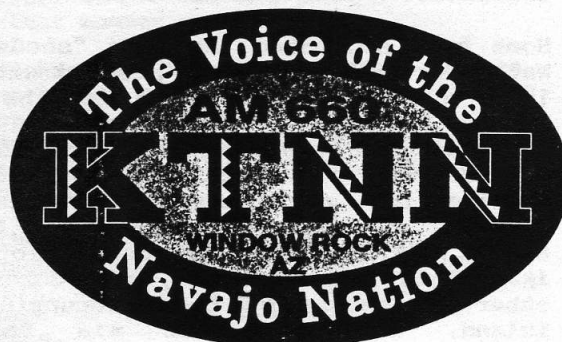
As you drive along the highways of northern Arizona you are likely to pick up a station, on your car radio, broadcasting in a strange language. It's not Spanish, and from time to time you hear a familiar name, such as "Bashas" (the name of a large Arizona supermarket chain). What you are listening to is a Navajo Indian radio station.

While American Indian broadcast station signals cover less than a sixth of the United States land area, the Indian population itself is widespread. The nation's two million Native Americans (0.8 percent of the U.S. population) live everywhere, not just on reservations as many people assume. The majority live off reservations in both rural and urban settings. More than half of the Native population resides in cities, but the second largest segment can be found on the country's three hundred reservations which are located in thirty-three states. These range from large reservations such as the 15 million acre Navajo Reservation in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, to reservations of less than one acre such as the Sheep Ranch Rancheria near Sacramento, California. All together there are 547 Indian tribes in the United States speaking dozens of different Native languages.

Many in the Indian community felt that there was a very real danger of a loss of cultural identity due to the lack of exclusive Native media. It was felt that the "mainstream" media in Native American communities contributed to the erosion of traditional life. The youth were bombarded by cultural influences from television that were bound to change tribal cultures. At greatest risk was the Native tongue, and the fear that if the languages died the culture would also.

There was a small amount of broadcasting aimed at Indians in places with large Native populations, such as Minneapolis, San Francisco, Gallup, and Oklahoma City, all places near oil and coal rich tribes. But this broadcasting was targeted on the pocketbooks of Indians. These stations would air commercials, sometimes in the local Native language, so when the monthly or biweekly checks would come in the Indians would have information on where to spend their money. This was the total extent of Native oriented programming designed for Indian consumption by most of these mainstream stations.

Native operated stations were seen as a potential tool to help combat



the negative images and false impression of Indians so prevalent in mainstream society. It was felt that mainstream broadcasting contributed to an uncomplimentary view of the American Indian. There were very few flattering images of Indians in network radio. They were traditionally portrayed as murderous fiends or mindless servants. In his study of early radio programming, J. Fred MacDonald cites only a handful of shows that cast Indians in a positive light; among them the *Cisco Kid* episode "The Battle of Wagon Box Corral," and the *Straight Arrow* series. According to MacDonald, there was an attempt at the network level toward a more positive depiction of Indians in the 1940's, but it had little staying power, as evidenced by a character in the 1950 program *Western Caravan*, who comments that "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." Probably the best known Native American on radio was the Lone Ranger's faithful companion Tonto, who in the view of historian Vine Deloria, Jr. "cemented in the minds of the American public the cherished falsehood that all Indians were basically the same - friendly and stupid." According to broadcast historian Erik Barnouw, radio was actually used to try to debunk the fact that Indians were poorly treated in the United States.

Because of these feelings, Indians were determined that their own radio stations would eliminate these stereotypes and get the facts straight. When the first Native operated stations went on the air in the early 1970's, it was felt that at least at these broadcast operations the Native people would not be "stereotyped, misrepresented, or denigrated." Programming would be sensitive to their needs, celebrating the life and history of the nation's first inhabitants.

Some have suggested that the "seeds" for Native broadcasting were planted with the 1969 takeover of Alcatraz by the "Red Power Movement." The Indians took possession of the island in the name of all American Indians. They issued a proclamation reclaiming the island by right of discovery and offered the United States \$24 in beads and trade cloth for it. This proclamation, and dozens of other statements by those occupying the island, were broadcast via Pacifica station KPFA-FM in Berkeley between

Cornell University
Consumer Hints
Agri-Briefs
Wingspread
Sounds of Solid Gold
Sounds of Country
Update (Music Program)
Country Roads
Your Story Hour
Man & Molecules
Echoes of the Native American
Navajo Nation Radio Network

SATELLITE
First Person Radio
Let's Hear It!
Horizon
All Things Considered

LOCAL ORIGINATED
Cultural Program
Indian News
Safety Tips
Women's World
Family Health
Motorist Guide
Childcare Program
Alcoholism Program
Spotlight On
Tales of Mystery
Chartbreakers
You & the Law
Stories for Little People
The Elders Speak

KTDB-FM 89.7
Pine Hill, New Mexico 87321
Thank-You!
for your pledge of \$_____ to
support **KTDB-FM**. Your
contribution helps make possible
quality, educational public radio
365 days a year. Your tax-deductible
donation is appreciated. Thanks for
supporting **KTDB-FM 89.7**.

Program listing for **KTDB**,
the Navajo station in
Pine Hill, New Mexico.

November 1969 and June 1971. The station loaned the Indians on the island a Marti transmitter to send their message to the station, which then broadcast it live to listeners in the Bay Area. Radio Free Alcatraz, as it was called, focused on the impoverished state of Indian affairs, demanding that attention be paid to Indian health, education, and cultural issues. From the perspective of those who occupied the small island, radio was the medium whereby the "truth could be conveyed." It could leap barriers and roadblocks and reach the ears and hearts of the public. This impressed Natives everywhere, and it definitely got people thinking about having their own broadcast facilities. Alcatraz was viewed by many as a turning point in Indian self-determination, and was certainly the point of conception for "Nationalist Native broadcasting."

The construction of Native owned radio stations began in 1971 at the height of the Indian rights movement. It was felt that these stations would further empower Native Americans in their quest for fair and just treatment. Native radio was perceived not only as a way to help retain their language but as a method for communicating to Indians who spoke a Native language exclusively. Many older Indians use English as a second language, if they use it at all, and were unserved by Anglo broadcasting stations.

The first noncommercial, public station affiliated with a tribe was KYUK in Bethel, Alaska. It began broadcasts in May 1971 and although it directed a substantial amount of programming to Native listeners, the bulk of its schedule was aimed at a mixed audience. Navajo station KTDB in Pine Hill, New Mexico, made its debut in April 1972 and fully directed its signal to Native listeners. Therefore, it claims to be the country's premier Indian-only broadcast operation.

In 1994 there were 11,577 radio stations, 1,518 television stations, and 1,456 low-power television (LPTV) operations in America. Of these totals, just over two dozen radio stations and under a half dozen LPTV's were licensed to Native Americans (mostly educational institutions) and were directing their programming to that audience. Native broadcasting has its own national satellite network and has acquired the political leverage to garner more financial support because of the impact it has in the Native community. On the reservation it is the sole source for Indian news, as well as the preserver of Native language and culture. In remote rural areas the Indian station provides the only reliable means of communicating timely news, public service announcements, and information to area residents. On many reservations, there is very limited telephone service. These stations provide emergency information and announcements in the most efficient manner possible.

Support for Native operated stations has come from a variety of sources, chief among them the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The withering of federal funding is a concern for those Native stations that qualify for CPB funding. Most stations now rely on a single source for the majority of their operating funds: the tribal government, the tribal business council, or the tribal school board.

There are many challenges facing the Indian broadcasters today. Chief among these are lack of money, inadequate staffing and training, lack of native-language skills on the part of staff, poor facilities and equipment, tribal interference, lack of native programming, and the competition from "mainstream" stations.

WINNING CONTEST ENTRIES

In the winter 1997 issue, Roger Hill sponsored a contest where members were asked to tell which five old time radio shows they would most like to see return for a year, not as reruns, but with new scripts. Here is part of the response. More will follow in future issues.

From: Francis D. Federighi

Here are my five entries in the contest announced in the Winter 1997 issue of NARA NEWS.

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT: Fifty some years ago, when I was in the fourth grade, I was a big fan of Captain Midnight, Chuck Ramsey, Joyce Ryan, and yes, even Ivan Shark. But then, my family's only radio went into the service shop where it remained for the next two weeks. Missing those ten episodes was a major tragedy for me and I can still remember my frustrations. Maybe a year of new episodes could alleviate my "Captain Midnight deprivation" syndrome.

THE FRED ALLEN SHOW: In my collection, this program is the most poorly represented of my favorite comedy shows. Fred was the thinking man's comedian, always current and a bit cynical. A weekly trip down Allen's Alley, even if only for a year, would be a privilege I could not resist.

THE SHADOW: Although many episodes of the Shadow are available to collectors, this program still has to be on my list. It has to be the ultimate expression of the notion that radio is "The Theater of the Mind." Not only were listeners forced to create Lamont Cranston, Margo Lane and all the villains in their mind, but also they had to visualize an invisible entity. "Visualize the Invisible." That's what made the Shadow the most radio-oriented show of all time. As we learned with the movie, no other medium could do justice to the Shadow. "Who knows what evil..." and "The weed of crime..." made "The Shadow knows" a permanent part of our culture. For my year's worth of shows, I would pick Bill Johnstone for the title role.

YOU ARE (CBS IS) THERE: At a time in my life when I was not at all interested in reading history, "You Are There" opened my eyes to the fact that history was really about stories...interesting stories. I have recently been able to hear a few of these shows, and they always keep my mind active and my interest involved. The familiar voices of members of the CBS news team add much to my enjoyment of this show. And there is so much more history now. Maybe some of the new shows would be about things where I really was "there."

THE STAN FREBERG SHOW: The last of radio's comedy shows and maybe the best. Its run of one 13-week summer replacement series was much too short. Stan Freberg is a radio genius who, because of the inroads of TV,

never had the chance to fully exploit the virtues of the older medium. I can't imagine to what new heights radio could have soared if he could have had ten years to produce programs, or even the one year this contest allows.

These are my selections. I look forward to hearing about choices of other club members.

From: Keith Sexton

I thought Roger Hill's idea of thinking of the five shows that I'd most like to hear redone for a year was a great idea. So my choices are shown below. I enjoyed thinking of them.

1. THE ADVENTURES OF SAM SPADE: The period with Howard Duff and Lureen Tuttle and direction by William Spear, along with very witty scripts, produced in my opinion the best radio detective series of all.

2. SUSPENSE: I particularly like the period in the late '40s and early '50s when major Hollywood stars appeared and everyone was surprised that many of them could be first rate radio actors as well. It would be fun to hear current stars do the same thing--how about Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Tom Hanks, etc. It was the best 20 year dramatic show on the air.

3. THE HALLS OF IVY: Ronald and Benita Coleman were excellent and Don Quinn supplied them with the most literate and erudite scripts that I can possibly remember. As a former University employee I suppose I especially enjoyed them because they dealt with a lot of academic issues, but did it so well and so entertainingly. There are still plenty of issues that they could deal with today--and many are the same.

4. THE SIX SHOOTER: James Stewart. It came late to radio and so had a short two year run, but it deserved much longer. Stewart's vocal dramatic ability was really quite remarkable. The scripts were well above average and the sound effects were excellent. Not quite the density of Gunsmoke (which I also greatly admire); a decided lighter touch.

5. LUX RADIO THEATER: How nice it would be to hear the announcer once more say, "Lux, Presents Hollywood" and hear the music swell, before he goes on to announce big stars in big movie adaptations. After all there are still big stars and big movies, we just don't get to "hear" them anymore. Personal note: in the 1930's I saw several Lux broadcasts from Hollywood. The orchestra, sound effects, etc. were all hidden behind a large curtain. Only actors reading into microphones. I was very disappointed; but I was never disappointed when I just sat at home and listened to the broadcast.

So there are my five. I'll be interested to see what other NARA members pick.

RACE TIME

John Snagge did BBC commentaries on the Oxford/Cambridge boat race for fifty years. In 1949 in a desperately close race he made his best-known gaffe: "It's a very close race. I can't see who's in the lead. It's either Oxford or Cambridge!"

Honors

Three of our NARA members were honored with awards at the 11th annual Old Time Radio & Nostalgia Convention held in Cincinnati last April. The first two were members Barney Beck and Jay Hickerson who were recipients of the annual "Stone/Waterman Award" in recognition of their outstanding service to the old time radio hobby. This award was named for Ezra Stone (Henry Aldrich) and Willard Waterman (the Great Gildersleeve), both of whom were active in this convention before their deaths.



Barney Beck, who was a sound effects technician for the Mutual Broadcasting System, handling such shows as the Shadow, Bobby Benson, Superman, Mysterious Traveler, Bob & Ray, and many others, was cited for his participation in many old time radio conventions. He has handled the sound effects for the re-creations at the Cincinnati convention for many years, as well as many of the other conventions around the country. He has also, at these events, put on sound effects demonstrations to show hobbyists just exactly how it was all done.

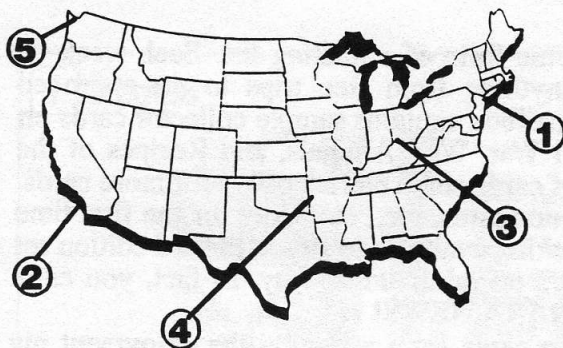
Jay Hickerson started publishing an independent OTR newsletter, *HELLO AGAIN*, back in 1970. This publication is still going strong twenty-eight years later. In 1971 he started the first of the old time radio conventions that was later to become the Friends of Old Time Radio convention held in Newark, New Jersey each year. This is the largest of all the OTR conventions held around the country, and its 22nd meeting, under Jay's leadership, will be in October. In addition to this he has published a number of program logs and similar type materials.



The third presentation went to Bob Burchett who received the first of an annual award named for Parley Baer (Chester on Gunsmoke). This award, to be presented to "collectors behind the scenes," was presented to Bob by Parley himself. Bob, the organizer of the Cincinnati convention, has involved himself in many other aspects of the hobby for many years, but truly he has been "behind the scenes" having others stand out front and take the credit. Since its beginning in 1984, Bob has served as editor of the bi-monthly publication, the *OLD TIME RADIO DIGEST*.

Our congratulations to all three of these gentlemen on their well deserved awards!!!

CONVENTIONS:



MARK YOUR _____ CALENDAR _____

The various conventions around the country are outstanding places to enjoy old time radio. All provide re-creations of old radio shows and workshops with some of the stars of old time radio. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to add a new dimension to your hobby.

We list dates here as soon as we receive them so that you can plan ahead.

- ① **THE FRIENDS OF OLD TIME RADIO CONVENTION** is held at the Holiday Inn North at the Newark, New Jersey airport. The hotel provides free shuttle service back and forth to the airport. Contact person is Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, Connecticut 06514. Jay can be reached by phone at (203) 248-2887. Future convention dates are:
22nd Annual Convention -- October 23 thru 25, 1997
23rd Annual Convention -- October 22 thru 24, 1998
24th Annual Convention -- October 21 thru 23, 1999
- ② **THE SPERDVAC CONVENTION** is held each year at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport. A free shuttle service is provided for those flying. The person to contact for information is Larry Gassman, Box 1163, Whittier, CA 90603. He can be reached by phone at (310) 947-9800. Future dates:
14th Annual Convention -- November 7 thru 9, 1997
15th Annual Convention -- November 13 thru 15, 1998
- ③ **THE 12TH ANNUAL OLD TIME RADIO AND NOSTALGIA CONVENTION** is scheduled for May 1 & 2, 1998 at the Marriott Inn on the north side of Cincinnati, Ohio, just off I-75. Because of overcrowding for the last several years, the convention will now move to much larger convention space in the same hotel. The contact person is Bob Burchette, 10280 Gunpowder Road, Florence, Kentucky 41042. Phone is (606) 282-0333.
- ④ **THE 14TH ANNUAL LUM & ABNER SOCIETY CONVENTION** will be held June 26 and 27, 1998 in Mena, Arkansas at the Best Western Lime Tree Inn. For information please contact Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora, Alabama 35062. His phone is (205) 648-6110.
- ⑤ **THE 6TH ANNUAL RADIO RALLY** of the Radio Enthusiasts of Puget Sound will be June 26 & 27, 1998 in Seattle, Washington. Contact person is Mike Sprague, P.O. Box 723, Bothell, Washington 98041. Phone is (206) 488-9518.



Radio Collector Cards by B.J. George

Most of us seem to be on some form of a mailing list. Each week we receive junk mail, offering anything from free trips to pre-approved credit cards. Often times our mailbox contains sample collector cards on such topics as America's Civil War, Wild Animals, and Recipes of the World. Along with these sets of cards come no risk offers for more cards, free collector's cases to house our cards, etc., etc. Now for the first time anywhere, NARA NEWS is making available to you, a limited edition set of radio collector cards. There's no minimum to buy. In fact, you can't buy them! They're free inside NARA NEWS!

I got the idea for doing radio cards from watching the enjoyment my children get in opening those free mail offers. I hope these radio cards will spark the same interest in our NARA members, both young and old, those new to our hobby, and the seasoned radio fans. I formatted the cards to be the same size as a 3"x 5" index card, for those who wish to house them in an index card box (available at most office supply stores). The cards are numbered, or can be arranged alphabetically, or by categories. You can simply cut them out and paste them onto index cards, or have these pages photocopied onto card stock paper at your nearest photocopy center. These cards may not be resold, and are only offered for your enjoyment. Future cards will include directors, writers, sound effects, and more of your favorite shows and stars. Write me if you'd like to see your favorite star. My e-mail is bjg@execpc.com.

3 Actor



Harold Peary

born: July 25, 1908

San Leandro, California

Hal Peary made his radio debut on KLX at the age of 13. He was billed as "The Oakland Tribune's Boy Caruso." Peary attended Santa Clara University in San Francisco and went on to appear in numerous radio shows, including *The First Nighter*, *Lights Out*, and *Girl Alone*. But Peary is best known for playing Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, first on *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and then on his own spin-off, *The Great Gildersleeve*. Hal made a series of Gildersleeve movies. He also appeared on tv's *Blondie* and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. Harold Peary died on March 30, 1985.



Blondie * Fibber McGee and Molly
* Flying Time * The Great
Gildersleeve * The Hal Peary Show
* Tom Mix * Welcome Valley

1 Actress



Eve Arden

born: Eunice Quedens
April 30, 1912
Mill Valley, California

Miss Arden began her theater career in San Francisco (1928). She made her Broadway debut in the 1934 *Ziegfeld Follies* and her film career began in the 1937 movie *Oh Doctor*. She was nominated for an Academy Award for her supporting role in *Mildred Pierce* (1945). And she won an Emmy in 1953 for her television role of *Our Miss Brooks*. Her television career also included *The Eve Arden Show* and *The Mothers-in-Law*. Miss Arden died November 12, 1990.



The Danny Kaye Show
The Ken Murray Program
Our Miss Brooks
The Village Store

2 Show-Western



Gunsmoke

first episode: April 26, 1952
last episode: June 18, 1961

Gunsmoke was different from other radio westerns in that producer-director Norman Macdonnell aimed for an adult audience. Writer John Meston attempted to present "what the West was really like." Sound men Bill James, Tom Hanley, and Ray Kemper included such effects as Matt's spurs clicking across the wooden boardwalks. Music was composed and conducted by Rex Koury. William Conrad played Marshal Matt Dillon, Parley Baer was Chester Wesley Proudfoot, Howard McNear was Doctor Charles Adams, and Georgia Ellis played Miss Kitty Russell. *Gunsmoke* aired on CBS.



"Around Dodge City and in the territory on West, there's just one way to handle the killers and the spoilers, and that's with a U.S. Marshal and the smell of...*Gunsmoke*."

BUY SELL TRADE

NARA CLASSIFIEDS

Non-commercial ads are free to all members. Your ad will be placed in one issue, but you can resubmit it as often as you like.

The OTR SOURCE LIST (1997 edition) is six pages long, containing over 150 entries of clubs, dealers, archives, publications, and even web sites. Each entry contains name, address, telephone number and e-mail address, if available. Even if you already have one, you should get an updated version. (To break the "year code," if yours is printed on gold paper it's the 1994 one. The purple one is 1995 and the green one is 1996. Any on white paper is at least five years old. Our 1997 edition is printed on orange paper.) Cost is only \$2 to NARA members and \$3 to everyone else. Send money, in stamps or cash please, to Jack French, 5137 Richarson Drive, Fairfax, VA 22032-2810. PLEASE no checks (this item cannot justify a trip to the bank and the post office), and send stamps in a usable denomination.....seven 32¢ ones would be about right. All profits go to NARA so please be generous. Orders filled same day and returned via first class mail. Get yours now!

I'm looking for a series of radio "spoofs" built around coach Art Turf from Inept Tech. The name of the show might have been "Sports Shorts with Coach Art Turf." If you have any information on this please contact Gordon Proper, P.O. Box 168, Bible School Park, NY 13737.

Rex Allen, the "singing cowboy" from movies and TV, appeared on the *National Barn Dance* during 1945, but does not have recordings of any of those appearances. If you have one of those shows in your collection, or any other of his radio appearances, please contact Jim Snyder, 2929 East Main Street #149, Mesa, AZ 85213. Phone: (602) 807-3368.

NARA NEWS

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

ONE ISSUE:

Full page	- \$50.00
Half page	- 25.00
Quarter page	- 15.00

FOUR ISSUES:

25% off above rates

A TIP OF THE ATWATER DIAL TO....

The following individuals for financial donations to NARA:

B.J. Cox of Kiowa, Kansas

Roger Smith of National City, Michigan

Laurence Vogel of Honolulu, Hawaii

Gene Larson, NARA's Staff Artist, for our centerfold on radio's sound effects artists. Gene spent 138 hours putting this together for us.

Frank Bresee for the donation of several commemorative items along with an Amos & Andy script personally autographed by Bill Hay.

Roger Hill for pictures from the the Carleton E. Morse dinner. See page 33.

Jack Palmer for a report on the Cincinnati convention. We didn't have room for it this time, but will get it into our fall issue.

Ken Weigel. We've been holding an outstanding fifteen page article from him for several months. We do plan to get that into our fall issue, and appreciate Ken's patience.

Our columnists in this issue: Don Aston, Frank Bresee, Bob Burnham, Jim Cox, Francis Federighi, Lou Genco, B.J. George, Roger Hill, Gene Larson, Bob Mott, Jack Palmer, Keith Sexton, Jayme & Laura Simoes, Ray Smith, and Hal Stephenson.

Those who have already send in articles for future issues: Barney Beck, Bob Beckett, Frank Bresee (6 articles), Jack French, Louise Grafton, Al Inkster, Gene Larson (4 articles), Arlene Osborne, Dominic Patrissi, Hal Stephenson (2 articles), and Ken Weigel.

All of the many members who have shared their concerns and suggestions on the libraries. Your views are appreciated and are of great importance to our officers.

Many thanks to all!!!

DEADLINES:

September 15 for the fall issue.

December 15 for the winter issue.